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Celebrated Crimes of the Russian Court

CZAR PETER I.

Celebrated Crimes of the Russian Court

BY

ALEXANDRE DUMAS

Illustrated

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Foreword

ALEXANDRE DUMAS AS A TRAVELLER

It was the mode at one time to make portraits of a notable person in the Janus mode, with two heads, "facing both ways." Philip of Champagne went farther by presenting his patron Cardinal Richelieu in three ways, two profiles and a central full face. But to fully portray Alexandre Dumas his likeness would have to be shown by the multiscope, for each of his many phases suffice to make an eminent one-feature man.

As a dramatist, there is no stage on which his pieces have not been exhibited; as a novelist, his fiction has been carried wherever steam has entered; as a newspaper projector and editor, his reputation was so high at home that Millaud (the capitalist who founded the great one-cent daily, the *Petit Journal*) and Villemessant (founder of the Paris *Figaro*) offered Dumas a fortune for his *Mousquetaire* journal; as a theatrical manager, Dumas carried on his own Théâtre Historique for years while not flagging in his literary labours; as an architect, he devised the Monte Cristo mansion with that novel adjunct of a lake-surrounded summer-house study with one

window for espial of duns and bores, recommended to his brethren of the pen; as a poet, he rhymed according to French models passably; like his own hero, Dantes, he could sail a yacht; as a horseman, the Cossacks of the Don were in raptures at his keeping pace with their wild steeds; as a fencer, he was his own Château-Renaud; as a sportsman, he has his fame; as a cook of the first water, he was a Brillat-Savarin conjoined with a Carême; as a musician, — but we are not to "leave out the wart," — Dumas had no ear for music and less voice, but he could write books of operas, and he did so.

But with all these traits, Dumas has not yet been properly appreciated as a traveller, even in his own land, — but, then, Parisians are poor travellers. Oh, it is not given to everybody to be a traveller worth following and listening to, when returned. Something more is required of a tourist-author than a well-filled wallet and note-book of trite observation and hackneyed details. How many travel-books have been written and, alas! published, and how few hold a place — not in the library, for they get there! but in one's memory and hand to be dwelt upon? You can count such on your fingers.

Let us first see how Dumas was fitted out by nature to be the traveller, for you will be convinced, even if you read only this experience in Russia, that he was fated to pass through "moving accidents by flood and field."

Alexandre Dumas as a Traveller

Alexandre's youth was spent in poverty scarcely genteel, his mother being the widow of a general officer under the Republic, whose enmity with Bonaparte induced that "good hater" — revengeful Corsican! — to suspend all pensions. The soldier's widow performed at the usual cost that miracle of bringing up the hero's son.

In vain was a silly attempt to make a priest of him, for he ran away from the seminary, in three days, "into the woods." It was his predilection to roam there with the village ne'er-do-wells and the older poachers, learning woodcraft like a new Shakespeare. But mark the destiny! he became versed in all athletic feats.

These inured a body and brain to contend against sedentary evils engendered by his devotion to literary production, for he wrote twelve hours at a stretch, to say nothing of an addiction to table delights. Luckily, Dumas drank water to the exclusion of rare vintages, in which he might have bathed if he had liked. His woodcraft lessons — see him mirrored in "Ange Pitou" ("Queen's Necklace" series) — come into play throughout his globe-trotting experience. Singularly enough, his first reading was in an illustrated "Buffon's Natural History." Beginning with avid listening to the weird narrations in charcoal-burners' shanties (*chantiers*), poachers' burrows, gamekeepers' lodges, he soon had a fund, not of exploits, but of inventions, to repay the story-tellers,

and his "yarns" were reckoned, by no mean judges of folk-tales, to be well-spun.

Except for the enthusiasm sustaining him in his drudgery days in town, Dumas reached thirty almost before the triumph of his play of "Queen Christine of Sweden" released him from the desk, and his inclination toward nomad life was manifested. His patron, the Duke of Orleans, urges the Ministry of 1830 to hasten the giving of the Legion of Honour cross to Dumas, as the latter purposes a journey in the North, and the decoration would lend the young traveller a more imposing effect. This way of looking at the insignia established by the bellicose Napoleon, from a Citizen-King's point of view, is enlightening. Was this an exploration of Russia already in the adventurer's mind? In any case, the overturning of the legitimate monarchy suspended distribution of official plums to government employees — Dumas owed his post as civil servant to his clear, bold handwriting.

It was not until 1832 that Dumas, with the itch for movement, — odd in a man having the conquered Paris stage for a footstool, — proposed to a publisher a book upon what was known as "the regular Swiss Round." M. Gosselin responded that the subject was written to death. Whereupon the wilful pen-driver bounded off into William Tell-land, and, soon, his "Impressions of Swiss Travelling" appeared in the *Revue des Deux Mondes,* which was the "Black-

wood" of French serials. This won him a reputation for attractive story-telling, which, after all, is the only one, with all his vanity and worth, he claimed. Critics were amazed that "the most common occurrences and trivial chatter furnished interesting pages." They granted, too, that the dramaturgist had soared above the melodramatic flights of his "Tower of Nesle" on facing Nature, — not that "Dame" Nature of Paris sketchers, who think Fontainebleau Woods quite a Black Forest, but that Mother Nature whom the ancients held to be the chief terrestrial goddess.

This first plunge into the sublime and splendrous caused the newcomer in nature-books to declare his creed and the alliance of descriptive novel — for he was of the school of Scott: "I am incapable of writing about a place never seen." This was counter to the stock joke, on the boulevard, that the authors of "Voyages Around My Study" found the money to see their subject-site in the sales of the work!

But it was in reality that Dumas flitted through Belgium and skirted the Rhenish banks. Talma, the tragedian, taking his future in advance on credit, baptized him, theatrically, as playwright, in the name of Schiller. His professional godson accordingly made the acquaintance of the scenes depicted in verse by the German poet, and his prose is not the less worth reading.

The French say that the appetite grows while eating. There was enough in Dumas' Parisian life of

lettered ease and theatrical luxury to chain him to lovely Lutetia, but he was much of a gipsy, — at least, of creole blood — he was half West Indian, — and restlessness was an enjoyable trait. His artistic position was such that he readily again obtained that governmental assistance which is a Frenchman's pride. He was titularly librarian to the Orleans family, and it was logical that when its son, the Duke of Montpensier, made "the Spanish Marriage" which once troubled politicians, Dumas should be detailed as an invited guest at the wedding in Madrid. The Queen of Spain made him a knight of the Carlos III. order. He went this time, the dignitary superseding the author, — transported on a man-of-war, bowed down to by captains, governors, functionaries, and, haughtiest of all, hotel proprietors, seeking a line in the inevitable travel-book, so that he seemed an ambassador extraordinary with his train of artists, translators, interpreters, and secretary. Twenty years ago, in Paris, every other literary veteran you met was a secretary of "the Great Alexandre." But bandits held off, fanatics refrained from hooting the odious Frenchman, cooks competed with choice concoctions for the praise of an adept, and as a true judge — which he was not — he was offered vintages which to common mortals are only known by labels.

His book on Spain was a revelation, for he had succeeded with that delusive country when stylists and artists with the pen had fallen short; only, he

was reproached by those who had not been baked in the sun on the plains or frozen in the mountains for too strong a glare and abrupt effects. The local colouring was too much like a scene-painter's — they wanted a Meissonier and not a Decamps. Yet it was Dumas who was in the right, if the general opinion of a place depends on "the admiration excited by its description."

From this popular reception and the gratitude of the Cabinet for its partially volunteer envoy, it no longer astonished anybody that, in 1846, Premier Salvandy despatched this same able "semi-detached" representative into Algeria, the new French colony. Still, this time, it was not without cavil. A deputy in Parliament rebuked the Administration for departing from the forms, and selecting for a stringent investigation a novelist and a newspaper man! He asserted that such an investigation would result ill. He was correct, from his bias, — the veritable officials would have "whitewashed" the faulty, while the bungler actually exhibited them as by the lime-light, together with "the beauties of the French administration." The report was not offered to the public, — but the story of the journey did so appear, and, as About says, with scrupulous adherence to government tradition, this book "shows that he travelled just to tell a traveller's tale." At all events, if Dumas did not please the office-holders, he acted like a thoroughly independent man who might stroll through

any tract and skim any seas. Dumas was the Count of Monte Cristo, at last, in person, with his own yacht. If lackeys shrank from him, it was not so with seamen, eager and proud to convey the lettered Cæsar and his fortunes.

Africa had taken a new face in the jaded Parisian eyes, and the popularity of Algiers as a winter resort dates from Dumas's letters home. In them was an effect of the Sahara mirage, the variegated tints through the Dumas prism.

On his laurels he might have rested, exotic leaves from many climes; his travel-books were mounting up into a series, in which "everything is to be found: history, geography, drama, eclogue and idyl, politics, gastronomy, with — all but — truth!" The last word is always from the envious; but even among them one had the candour to avow — "Dumas lies like truth!" But he *had* been at the places whereof he wrote, and the official paymaster carried authenticity to the middle-class reader. As Hugo said: "Dumas is one of the comforters." The stay-at-homes revelled in this roster of adventures and perils, through which Gallic gaiety galloped madly, but ever kept a safe footing.

Replete with applause, he was adjured to stay in town by publishers of books and magazines, while theatrical directors implored. But, like Dickens, who restored his taxed wits by long walks, Dumas, on a greater scale, would recuperate after a three-volume

novel or a five-act play by a little scamper to the Pole or a trot around the Austrian empire. A tour of the world was equivalent in him to the Highland scramble or seaside trip of the cockney-journalist.

Preceding Jules Verne, Dumas had his yacht built to his taste, — the *Emma,* a *goletta,* a familiar rig on the Middle Sea. In 1859, Dumas was about to cruise there, when his course fell athwart that of the grand filibuster, Garibaldi.

These two spirits were made to run in grooves. They both belonged to the Carbonari, that secret patriotic society which aimed to make Italy free and Rome the capital of a republic again. Frenchman as he was, Dumas never forgave their forsworn comrade, Louis Napoleon, who, to become emperor, broke the oath of that fraternity, which was why, under the Empire, his career was fettered. Dumas had met the "Lion" just as he was coming with his One Thousand to capture Sicily. Appointed his aid-de-camp, the novelist had his paternal instincts revived; he went to the mainland with funds to buy weapons for the insurgents, and supplemented them largely out of his own purse, — this was not government funds, though it would have been excellent satire to have frustrated Napoleon's liberticide intentions with his own napoleons! On Garibaldi arriving at Naples, sweeping all resistance before him, he found Dumas awaiting with the munitions so much wanted. In return — not of the cash advanced — the forthcom-

ing dictator made his friend curator of museums. By this title, Dumas, with enthusiasm, set to open up the buried cities of Vesuvius on a large scale. Unhappily, the Neapolitans are nothing if not exclusive. To the standing cry of "Down with all foreigners!" succeeded a novel but similarly unpleasant one: "This Dumas interloper into the bay!" The author, astonished at this new version of the Sicilian Vespers, pathetically remarked: "I am used to French ingratitude, but this Italian sort cuts to the heart!" But the motto was "Italy goes it alone!" (*"Italia fara da se!"*). The disappointed revolutionist went aboard his vessel and put out for the Barbary States.

So Italy lost a valuable supporter, but the reading world gained an entrancing volume of travel-talk. It was the time when Dumas the Younger was attaining fame, and purblind critics tried to see analogy in their writings. But the Elder was clear-sighted, for he said: "Alexandre photographs — I paint!" And it was paint used from a full palette.

Though England much influenced Dumas, — he owns his obligations to Scott and the English dramatists, his pieces with scenes laid in Great Britain, "Kean," "Catherine Howard," and the English episodes of the "Musketeers" restoring the Stuarts, — it was not till now that he visited London. It was the great fiasco of his life. For he had engaged Drury Lane Theatre for an impossible essay, — to play "Monte Cristo" in two evenings, a Chinese

plan of continuous performance not to Bull's taste. Besides, the latter was infuriated against all the French by the threats of Napoleon's "colonels" to invade England. The play was boo'ed off "the hallowed stage," and the actors pelted home. But the good-natured man cherished no rancour, — you will not find in his lines anything like the persistent butt his contemporaries made of the Englishman.

At home, he was upraising another Folly, — the mansion called, also, "Monte Cristo." This Aladdin's palace made many believe that, at last, he was to be a fixture in Paris. Not only was he architect of his own fortune, but of his own residence, — luckier than Balzac, who built solely on paper. The sensible feature in the magnificent mass was his study, a Gothic lodge. This was a pleasant star-chamber, as the ceiling was star-spangled blue, while the tone was azure; a deep fireplace with enormous hood was in reminder of the wood fires at Villers-Cotterets, where he passed his boyhood rustically. The stones outside were blazoned in scarlet, each with a title of one of his works.

For this factitious *rus in urbe* — it was rather too convenient to Paris for the sycophants to run out to see Dumas! — he changed his paternal motto, "To him who hath shall be given!" (*"Deus dabit, Deus dedit!"*), to "I love those loving me!" (*"J'aime qui m'aime!"*)

Though this stupendous erection on an author's

precarious earnings, and another house — the Historic Theatre — were sold, it was with astonishment that those who had seen this Sisyphus renew his rolling of the rock up-hill, after it had slipped him, heard that "Dumas is off again!" It was the government which, all things considered, was a little fairy godmother, coming to his aid. He was desired to go to Russia, even to its perilous borderland! What would the sybarite do in a region of Cossacks and Tartars, for the French had no kindly memories of the invaders of 1815? No novel-reading revenue officers there to pass the trunks bearing the talismanic letters, "A. D."; no authors to toast a brother; no managers to banquet the dramatist; no professor of languages to give his class a holiday that he might pilot the great Alexandre around town; no *conoscente* to dispute for his company at his country-seat; and what a pain for a gourmand to go where a candle-end stirred in cabbage soup is a dainty! On the other hand, that stanch Republican, Hugo, applauded, saying, well knowing his man: "Wherever Dumas goes, he will sow French ideas," — meaning about freedom, rights of man, etc. And the reader will remark, later, that Dumas did remain steadfast to his principles even in aristocratic Russia. Enough that the home government did supply the funds and Dumas intrepidly departed for the vapourous Ultima Thule.

His works went before him, like the poet's flute-players, — for he was widely known in Russia. One

of his early stories, "The Master-at-Arms," has its scene laid in Czar-land, in fact. But to the military, he was son of the Republican General Dumas, who had fought them in the Tyrol. Besides, he was physically a winning representative of France in this realm of big men, adoring physical force. In 1863, Dumas was upright, athletic, broad and large, robust, and his "Porthos" about the legs; he was so nicely proportioned that he carried off the adipose beginning to show of the fatty degeneration, finally his master. Gray showed in his curly hair, but the head was firmly set on a massy neck, between Herculean shoulders. He was a good, though heavy horseman. His eyes were unvaryingly bright and often tender. Over all the broad face, dimpled and plump, beamed a geniality, confidence, and guileless self-satisfaction quite as catching as his Homeric laugh. His latest secretary, Gabriel Ferry, affirms that "never was a human visage more free in its display of fun, heartiness, frankness, and affability." His hand was strong enough to draw aside Nature's majestic veil from the peaks of the frosty Caucasus. As stated elsewhere, Dumas's official instructions were to observe the effect of the emancipation of the serfs, under Emperor Alexander II.'s ukase, an act of immensity only paralleled by the Emancipation Act delivered by President Lincoln.

But that apart, as you will see in the following pages, Dumas happily found time for varied jaunts

in all directions and among all levels. Though princes clashed to be his hosts, he did not disdain to toast his mutton *cabob* on the pine splint or bake a potato in cottage fire ashes. He would drink tea with the quality, and *kvass* and *vodki* with the *mujiks*. Lower than that, he "sounded" the chain-bound prisoners for Siberia, for their life-stories, in the same thorough manner as he did prison and palace walls to dislodge their awful and fascinating legends.

So fraught with compassionate and sympathetic spirit is Dumas, finding such pure delight in novelties and by inquisitiveness above paltry prying, — straying into byways and untrodden wilds to seek the sublime and the distracting, — that one travels with him as a boy accompanies his father, fearless like him, and relishing all with the same zest. It is not merely a cicerone, but Cicero, wise and eloquent. But he can be Juvenal at need — witness his scathing exposure of Russian corruption. What is remarkable above all is that the mass of Inertia called All the Russias should be still what he pictured it, — his figures and their surroundings wear the same aspect to-day in their successors. Alas! Dumas-Diogenes could not find an honest man! No hopes for the aristocracy, — none for the bureaucracy, — but yet, he foresees that the mass will be free and happy.

MIKAEL GORTSHAKOV.

Author's Preface

I do not know, dear readers, if you remember, — but, there! it is many years ago! — my saying: "I am going to make the Mediterranean trip. I shall write the story of the Old World, — which is nothing more or less than that of Civilization." There was a good deal of laughter at my vaunt, and more mockery, — and a man (the theatrical manager Harel), into whose treasury I had turned a million francs, revenged himself for my bounty by a rich jest. He said: "Don't you know, Dumas has discovered the Mediterranean!" After that, he believed that he had paid me back in full. The jest was worth its value, but was that a million francs — the profit he made out of my early plays? I beg to doubt it.

My Italian tour was followed by a Spanish one, and each by a volume upon it. They were difficult to accomplish — the tours, not the books, of course! — without government sustenance and on an author's simple revenue; but, with Heaven's help, they were not impossible. I may also thank the transportation companies, on land and water, charging nothing for such valuable merchandise as M. Dumas and secretary. In these journeys I saw only what others had

seen before me, and narrated them, too, — but even if I did so better, the matter would still be second-hand.

My French tour cost six thousand francs; my Italian one, eighteen thousand, — apparently, in travelling, it is not the first step that costs most, — and my Spanish one, thirty-two thousand. But, for my latest, the Ministry of Public Instruction allotted me ten thousand francs — which did not recompense me; but, when a project is achieved, what matters the cost?

Now, the new travels I was to take were on a line and of an extent not previously made by any one.

Officiously, if not officially, I was to observe and judge the effect of the Czar Alexander II.'s emancipation of the serfs. I engaged to write some articles upon the great deed. At a distance, with home ideas of liberty and slavery and national reasonings, everybody believed, and so did I, that such accounts were easily written. It took me many months' stay in Russia to show me that, contrariwise, it was the hardest task in the world. Another proof is that those Russian authorities who have written on the subject, no matter to what party or shade of opinionists they belonged, have never managed to satisfy even their own partisans or the holders of their opinion. At three months' end, after having conversed with the personages who urged the emperor to issue

the Emancipation Law; with the slaves in whose behalf it was issued; with the press-writers who clamoured for it; and with the landholders (I do not say slaveholders) whom it struck, I flattered myself I was in the position to give exact information upon its present effect and coming consequences.

But, in the meantime, that report being neither here nor there, — certainly not here, dear reader, so be not alarmed! — I acted on a friendly invitation to see Familiar Russia. It was made by a Russian friend, — to accompany him in a princely way to St. Petersburg and be his best man at his sister-in-law's wedding. I was to look on, but I might look off upon the grand political operation of the liberation of forty-five million serfs.

But I did not intend to settle down in the New Capital. When I should have witnessed the marriage, and seen all the sites and sights, I meant to go on to the Old Capital, Moscow. I also should have passed some nights on the Neva River, when one can read a love-letter — however fine the handwriting — those fair, translucent nights! I should shudder, as a shadow would fall athwart the lustrous stream. For it would be the shadow of the Holy Terror, — that of the Fortress, the Citadel, the doubly saint-ridden Peter-and-Paul Castle, — in a word, "The Bastile" of Russia, still standing and still swallowing up talent and wit and poetry, all who war with the pen and pencil, though the other is blown, in

dust, afar! I should glean its legends, and the dread river would chime in with some of its ghastly memories. The Tower's expelled captives would find not only a watery grave but an icy tomb. For this, do they bless the waters! In their turn, I should see the palaces reflected like the prison, and they would echo out their reminiscences of Czars and Czarinas, perished in their prime of precocity, — parricides crowned while the crown was yet warm, torn from the head, — pretenders slaughtered, and the cheated and disheartened self-slain.

Along the way to Moscow, the "Great Village" yet, I should peer into queer places, — abandoned palaces of ephemeral favourites, — half-way jails for the long string of the "Siberia-bound," perhaps, such as disgraced dukes chained leg to leg with a poacher or barnburner, — lingering in their cells to hear, lips to ear, their veracious stories, — doleful and dark, but letting in light upon that incomprehensible seesaw-society.

I should peep at Tver, that old seat of the independent princes, but absorbed, like Burgundy and Brittany, by the sovereign power, by that Louis XI. of the North, Ivan the Terrible, who slew one of his sons and dungeoned the other, — which did not gainsay his being "The Great," for he freed his country of the Tartar yoke. The monarch who drives the intruder from his realm is always great to posterity.

Next, I should enter the Hallowed City, mounting the Czar's citadel to view not only the palace-cathedral, but the domes golden or green, the crumbling Kremlin, the innumerable belfries, and traces still of the monstrous conflagration devouring the town of thirty-five thousand souls and singeing into flight an army five hundred thousand strong. Covetously, I should gaze upon the bazaars, and listen in the caravansaries to the legends of Menschikof the beggar-boy become prime minister and dying, in Siberia, a convict; and the Cinderella rising to Czarina. I should see the Trinity Church where its sanctity did not protect the infant Czar Peter and his mother, even though on the altar, — where he vowed to exterminate his would-be murderers, — and the Strelitz Guards were to perish thereby.

I should feast my eyes on the treasuries of sanctuaries, crown armories, and the great annual fairs, — attracting trade out of Persia, China, the Ind, where flashed Circassian arms, Tula silverware, and Cathay gold filagree; where malachite and lapis lazuli are sold in blocks like ice; where turquoises are poured out by the bushel; where one is delighted — or disgusted — tastes differ! — by the caravan tea, bought by the Russ at its weight in silver and by Europeans at that in gold.

I should sail on the Volga — the Queen of European waters, as the Amazon to one America and the Mississippi to the other; I should hawk the heron

and chase the frosted-white hare; I should taste the fresh caviare and discover that the famous sterlet is nothing but sturgeon young; I should lie on priceless furs while listening to the tales of the hunters who risked death or mutilation to obtain them.

Then, on the interminable Steppes I should dwell some days with the nomads, where the endless verdure undulated to the stretch of sight, like the Caspian's billows. These Tartars would be the hosts of to-day, as they were the bogies of my boyhood: little, greasy, yellow gnomes, with long beards, pointed caps, and full red breeches, armed with spears and bow and arrows.

Standing in a balcony window of a princess's drawing-room, I should look out on Europe streaming into India, and Asia flowing into the colder world.

Leaving the Kalmuck Tartars on one hand and the Cossacks on the other, I should visit Taganrog, where an emperor (Alexander I.) died of regret — or remorse — at conniving at his father's "removal"; and Kertch, where Mithridates the poison-proof had to use a vulgar mode of death to avoid the Romans in pursuit. And I should reach Galatz. Thence, a look around to see if Semlin and Belgrade were not as usual at war, and, ho! up the river to Vienna. Vienna is next door to Paris, and in three days I should be among ye to say: "Dear readers, I have, in six months, run over six thousand miles, gathering amusement for you! Do you know me again? Here I am!"

ALEXANDRE DUMAS.

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Celebrated Crimes of the Russian Court

CHAPTER I.

IVAN, "THE TERRIBLE"

(1533-1584)

THE most celebrated of the Ivans, emperors of the Russias, has been called "the Louis XI. of the North"; but he was, in the body, much more like King Henry VIII. of England, and resembled him morally in having had seven or eight wives when the Greek Church, which was his, allows but four marital unions to the orthodox. He is one of the most curious and gloomy tyrants to study; yet, without claims, he has attained historical height and popular respect is attached to his memory.

As he drew his first breath, Russian freedom was exhaling its last: to the slave, captured in war, and the serf, the slave born to the land, was added the peasant, by being clamped to the earth which he tilled and with which he went at a sale.

He was son, this fourth Ivan, of a Basil son-of-Basil (Vasili-Vasiliewitch), a grand prince or grand duke, first designated as Czar (Tsar). His Russia, though of the sixteenth century, was still as Slavonic as in the eleventh. The dimensions of his "Grand Russia" were as "Little Russia" to what they became when his rule terminated after fifty years.

His fate to earn such a name as "The Terrible" was inherited; his mother, Helena, was, without exaggeration, hailed as being a combination of Agrippina, Poppeia, and Messalina. She was the second regent in Russia, her predecessor being Olga of note.

Although Ivan's father had Basil for his patron saint, he chose to devote the boy to St. Sergius. On his birthday, the proud father placed the infant in that saint's shrine, in Trinity Cathedral of Moscow. This shrine is in brass and was covered by a solid silver baldaquin, weighing ten quintals — the gift of the Empress Anna. She, alone, seems to have thought in her time that the dedication was of some good to the country.

The Scriptures are profuse in picturing the evils when a boy prince reigns — through others, but they do not prophesy those happening through others. In this case, the regent-mother was poisoned, her favourite imprisoned, and the Prince Chouiski, who had subverted the ruling powers, took command over the heir, then seven years old. As the usual first step of a usurper, the treasury was pillaged, the state lands

seized, and the adherents of the past régime driven afar. Chouiski, on at least one occasion, received ambassadors, seated on the throne, with his spurred boots resting on the chest of young Ivan, prostrate before him. The unhappy princeling's childhood passed amid barbarian saturnalias. As the last of the house of Rurik fell, the Old Russia crumbled away.

The boy was forced to witness public executions, for which the Chouiskies had been judges and in which they actually took a hand with the sword or axe. In spite of his tears in fright, he saw Prince Belski cut to pieces in the council-chamber, and Woronzoff, another prince *(boyard)*, trampled to death. This daily sight of blood-spilling did not tend to making the observer humane. Indeed, he listened with precocity to hints that his thraldom might terminate with the overthrow of the tyrants, if he gave the word. But it was not until his fourteenth year that Ivan was able to consult with his uncles, the Glinskies. In a hunt they rushed out of ambush, and, encouraged by the prince, fell upon the Chouiskies, whom they threw to the dogs, who ate them up alive.

The enslavement was followed by utter freedom, perhaps as injurious. The new friends assured Ivan that all he saw was his: people, lands, houses, their wealth and lives. Courtiers are the same all the world over; it was the minister opening a window in Versailles Palace and telling the young Louis XV.

that all he saw was his property. Ivan was urged to reward without stint and spare nothing in punishment. On the complete destruction of the mind, they hoped to sustain their power. To torture men he was trained to torture animals. They pushed his hand to throw household pets from tower tops, and held the lance for him to prick bears and lions in their cages.

One day the young ruler was aroused by the shouts and alarm of a fire; fires in wooden towns were always a terror; he rose, and looked around for his usual companions. The Glinskies were not there. He ran to the window, whence he saw the town aflame — Moscow burning down for the tenth or twelfth time. On pikes borne by men, infuriated with hideous glee, and amid the torches which had ignited the oppressors' palaces, he recognized the severed heads of his uncles.

But in the midst of the clamour and the carnage, one fanatic thrust himself between the young prince and the mob. It was a second Peter the Hermit, who, like the Jewish prophets and the Moslem dervishes, did not shrink from attacking the king himself. This monk, Sylvester, stepping up to the throne, the Bible in his hand, and lifting his right to heaven, thundered that Heaven was wroth against cruel princes, and that their crimes kindled that wrath. At the same time his young and fair bride was brought in; young Ivan ran to her and promised, on her head, to repent and behave better. To this bold-speaking monk and

ameliorating wife joined a nobleman known for his piety and bravery.

For fourteen years, Russia blessed this triumvirate of Sylvester, Anastasia, and Adaschef. During this period, peace and order prevailed; the army was made regular and the militia-guard (*Strelitz*) created; a standing army of seven thousand Germans was formed; landlords were compelled to provide, for so much land, an armed soldier, or pay in cash.

Having an army, Prince Ivan sought to make use of it, though he was not a warrior.

In 1552, he attacked Kasan. It was the boundary-mark where Asia began at that era. Kasan was a capital in the immense Mongolian empire; its khanate was in the fifteenth century strong enough to defy the Golden Order (*Horde*); its history was of conflict between the Tartars and Russians. Ivan crossed the Volga — *the* Russian river, as the Mississippi is the North American, and the Amazon the South American. His formidable army camped in the vast plain from the Volga to the sea. A monument is reared here to the Russians fallen in his assault of October in the same year. The engineers had demolished the citadel (*kremlin*) with gunpowder, and by the breach the Russians entered. The fighting went on from house to house, with the carnage engendered by opposition in race, creed, and manners.

So sure was Ivan that he would conquer that he had brought a portable wooden chapel, installed on

the field of victory, and the prayers of thanksgiving were said in it. The tumulus, no doubt, occupies its site. The mosques were thrown down and the stones used for churches. And, as the foundation-stone of the Moslem temples was found to rest on a cross, the custom sprang up, in Russian ecclesiastical building, to set the foundation-stone of a church on a crescent. A town hereby retains the name of King's-town, as a hill known as the King's Mountain, from the victor dining on the summit to view his prize and the river, which from its sluggishness a witty traveller has styled, "A hesitation of water for five thousand miles!" Within two years Ivan had made himself master of this region to the Caspian Sea, comprising the richest capital, Astrakan (Star of the Desert). He raised forts to repress the Tartars, and was saved from battling with the Turks by their army perishing in the desert between the Volga and the Ural Mountains. In his time, Siberia was added to his realm. Poland was likewise attached. The Russians caught a forecast of the prospect, — a great destiny, and might measure their forces doomed to be concentrated in a few hands; and to expand they organized despotism — that foe to healthy expansion.

Their chief was a typical leader. A large, robust frame; a very full chest and broad shoulders; shaggy hair and imposing beard; eyes very bright and lively; the features regular and under some control; the complexion rather fair than dark.

The republic and its capital, Novgorod, had a profound fame as a stronghold. A proverb ran, "None can contend against Heaven or Novgorod the Great!" It had submitted to his grandfather; Ivan imagined that it had revolted against him. He assailed and stormed the city without resistance, but, after slaying all in his advance, drove the rest into a vast staked enclosure, and thence, by cuttings in the ice, out upon the Volga, where famished bears, wolves, and dogs were let loose upon them. These creatures tore them to pieces, for the soldiers on the banks repulsed the fugitives. These massacres lasted a month, and when twenty thousand innocent wretches had perished, the conqueror (!) said seriously to his captains: "Pray for — *me!*"

Passing on to Tver, he overran it, and perpetrated the like crimes and madness; but, with the contradictoriness of a maniac, when he captured the petty republic of Pskof he spared the people and replaced the chief burghers in their offices.

Covered with cypress rather than palm and laurel, he marched toward Moscow, where a premonitory thrill saddened the people. They saw funeral-pyres set up among gibbets, and on these pyres large caldrons. Five hundred nobles, after being racked, were hung on these gallows-trees or boiled in the caldrons; others did not arrive at the execution, as the headsmen hacked them to pieces on the road.

The homicidal monsters of yore usually refrained

from slaughter of women and children; but the terrible Ivan overlooked none. Wives were hanged at their house doorways so that their husbands and sons had to brush by them, — and it was forbidden for the corpses to be cut down! Children were impaled on seats at table, so that the family had to take their meals with that gruesome parody of "the vacant chair." Not Phalaris, Nero, or Caligula invented such horrors.

Despite these blood-spots and shades, peace had its victories. The printing-press was introduced; the Emperor Charles V. was asked to provide a hundred artists and artisans of all kinds; Archangel was established, that port-hole looking on the north, as St. Petersburg was, later, to be the window on the west; the privileges of the nobles were curtailed; the clergy were checked in becoming landholders; paganistic practices disappeared, and a code was made of the confused laws.

In this brief Golden Age of Ivan, by his union with the Princess Sophia, daughter of Michael Paleologus, heiress to the Greek empire, whose uncle had died of grief at the Turks invading the Byzantine realm in 1453, — by this union, we repeat, Ivan might esteem himself heir to the same. In Ivan's foundation-church, "The Protection," in Moscow, is the arm-chair offered to him on this marriage by the ambassadors who came from Rome on this occasion. He thereupon changed the old Russian emblem of the

Slavonian Knight for the Double-headed Eagle, as sovereign of Constantinople. This eagle looks two ways, to the east and to the west, foreseeing Russia bathed in the Black, the White, the Yellow, and — remoter still — the Red Seas. It was connected with Ivan that the word Tsar, or Czar, was employed; hitherto the Muscovites had been content with grand duke or grand prince (*Valiki Kniass*). Some authorities hold the word Czar to be a corruption of Cæsar; others that it is the Babylonian and Ninevite final of *osor, ezzar, asar,* etc., to royal names, signifying the throne or authority. As Ivan became master of lands governed by the Tartars, and their chiefs had the title of Tsar, he simply took it over with the conquest, intimated Voltaire. However, Queen Elizabeth, who wished to keep friendly with the Russian potentate, since England had the sea-carriage fur trade, styled Ivan "emperor"; this was not confirmed until the European powers so recognized Peter the Great, a hundred and fifty years later. The present Russians use "Gospodar Imperator" where we use Czar.

At all events, whatever his title, Ivan assumed the luxury of the Cæsars. Edward VI.'s ambassador tells of a six hours' banquet to a hundred guests, who ate off gold plate and were served by domestics who changed their attire, though magnificent, four times; another guest noticed three gold drinking-cups a foot wide, and counted thirty-eight silver dishes. It is true

that the cookery was, in harmony, "terrible," says a good judge.

The dark lining to this splendour was not slow to appear.

The Tartars, including Mongols, again threatened Moscow. Under Ivan it was considered "the Queen of Russian Cities." It was of astonishing extent, more like villages agglomerated than a city, and in the midst was the cathedral built by Ivan in token of his Kasan victory, very high, and having an enormous bell. The architect so pleased him with this masterpiece that he had his eyes put out so that he should not design a counterpart! The barbarians had burnt former Moscows, and, this time, they came so near that a ford is pointed out as bearing their name. Ivan fled to shut himself up at Alexandrovski, where he turned monk, with three hundred of his myrmidons, who had to expiate deeds of bloodshed, too.

But his people would not let him shun them; they dote on their tyrants, — nations do at times.

Without their dread prince, how could they defend themselves? Why did he flee? Did they frighten him? Had not the great lord a right of life and death over them? The state could not exist without the master! To say nothing of the realm, how about his abandoning religion, by which so many souls might yet be saved?

So he returned, like Charles V., out of the monastery, but in sombre sadness. To this melancholy mad-

man, all the foes of peace, welfare, and justice whispered evil. Was the death of his beloved Anastasia natural? The Czar had witnessed so many hastened deaths that he readily believed this slander. It was also asserted that the princes were ready to overthrow him. His ministers had beguiled him by witchcraft, they told him.

Forgetting the effect of his brief encloistering, he resumed the orgies and massacres surrounding his boyhood; he stabbed a noble who had struck his favourite; he saw another slain at the altar for venturing remonstrances; he exiled the general who had taken Kasan; he tortured the Voyvode Scheremetoff, questioning him during the torture:

"What have you done with your treasure?"

"By the hands of the poor, I gave it to Christ!" was the exasperating reply.

Thenceforth, his reign was that of the Terrible Czar. After the nobles, his own son; he slew Ivan with a stake, or, as some assert, sat him on the throne and killed him there; he sent another son into the dungeon; one of his victims, caught disguised as a monk, was placed on a keg of powder and Ivan had fire set to it, saying: "Cenobites are angels, and should fly in the air!" He baked a prince in an oven, and had a treasurer and his four sons killed by the Chinese torture of "being hewn in a thousand pieces"; he threw boiling water on his jester, and, when the sufferer could not laugh at the jest, stabbed him;

in short, by a death-strewn way he was approaching death.

His body had collapsed, says a chronicler who saw him; "his head was bald; his beard so scanty that it was a disfigurement; his eyes were dead and sunken; bestial ferocity deformed his features."

A comet appearing in 1584, the popular voice greeted it as signifying release from the tyranny of Ivan IV. He believed it himself, for he called magicians and astrologers to a house in Moscow provided for their arts, and forced them to name his death-day. He went out upon a platform of his favourite church, and humbly asked the prayers of the lowliest. He tried to trade with Heaven for good terms. But, happening to recover on the day designated as fatal, he said that the soothsayers had made a blunder, — that it was they who should die and not he! He felt so well that he sat to a game of chess; when, playing a pawn against his partner, he stood up, but fell backwards, and died on his bed.

He had killed one son; he designated another to succeed him, and another was in the cradle. It was the Demetrius (Dmitri) whose murder led to the famous incident of "the False Demetrius." Ivan is remembered as "The Terrible." Perhaps an autocrat alone can justly judge an autocrat. In this case, hear what the Czar Nicholas wrote of him, at the age of fourteen: "Czar Ivan Vasiliewitch was severe and headstrong. Hence he was dubbed 'The Terrible.'

Yet he was brave (?), just, and liberal in his rewards; above all, he contributed to his country's happiness and development." But he was also called "The Great" by his contemporaries, because he freed his country from the Tartar yoke; and a man is always great in posterity's eyes who drives out a foreign tyrant, as we repeat.

CHAPTER II.

THE ROMANCE OF THE FALSE DEMETRIUS

(1591)

THE temptation of a kingdom is so tremendous that there is no realm without its Perkin Warbecks and Lambert Simnels, — that is, pretenders to the throne by natural claim. The "Prisoner of the Temple," for Russia, is the "Little Dmitri." The site of his terrible tragedy is Uglitch, a town built on an elbow of the Volga, where the shore slopes toward the plain whereon it is built. The time was 1591.

Czar Ivan the Terrible, in dying, left two sons, — Feodor and Demetrius; a third son, Ivan, he had killed in a mad outburst.

Feodor succeeded his father, and the title of heir apparent, the Czarowitch, passed on to Demetrius (Dmitri), though the Greek Church only recognizes as lawful the children of one's first four marriages, and Ivan had married seven or eight times.

But, as the prince was weak and gentle, he was not presaged a long life, and troubles were feared unless the next comer, Demetrius, should be assured in his seat. Feodor's great pleasure, when he had scrupu-

lously said his prayers, was to read pious legends or to ring the bells with his own hands to summon the reverent to mass. "A sacristan," sneered his sire, "and not a sovereign!"

As society was constituted then, and with such a disposition, so peculiar an empire as Russia could not be managed; so Feodor, engrossed by his religious duties and recreations, let all the business of state be conducted by his brother-in-law, Boris Godunof.

By the dead hand, the town of Uglitch was assigned to Demetrius as appanage. Boris assigned to him, in his turn, to watch over him, — or, rather, "keep" him, — the Dowager Czarina, Maria Feodorowna, and the boy's three uncles.

In 1591, young Demetrius, holding court at ten, had his little train of officers. They were spies for the regent. The three uncles were high livers, deep toss-pots, and fierce gamblers, always grasping out for money. Now, the paymaster was a tool of the regent; he resisted irregular payments, and, as he was sustained on appeals to high quarters by his master Boris, the three dependents inveighed against him, and, with their sister joining, inspired the young prince with hatred for the ruler. This enmity was heightened by the tale she was filled with; it was said that the Czar's health was shattered by magic used by Tartars for Boris's gains; one of them, Michael, was an astrologer, and credited with torturing the sovereign by wounding and singeing a wax image,

like Feodor, according to recognized practices of the Black Art.

As for Demetrius, he was plainly Ivan the Terrible's child; he delighted in animals fighting. He tormented them so that the sensitive Boris revolted. Finally, a great crime was imputed to him, akin to the wax images. One winter day, while he was playing outdoors with his pages, they made some snow-men. But they named them after the favourites of the regent, and on the biggest bestowed his name. Then, with coping-stones pulled off a crumbling wall, for snowballs were too soft, they stoned all the snow images, while the prince, armed with a wooden sword, sliced the head off the facsimile Godunof, saying:

"I shall do that really, when I am big enough!"

In midafternoon of the 15th of May, 1591, young Demetrius, whose mother had quitted him briefly, was playing with four boys, his pages and companions, in the palace yard, a vast enclosed place. His governess, his nurse, and a waiting-maid were also by. He had strewn some nuts on the ground and was amusing himself by stabbing them with a knife. Suddenly, without the slightest outcry being heard, the nurse saw the boy writhing on the ground and bathed in his own blood. Running to him, she saw that his throat was cut and the artery spouting. He expired as she arrived, without gasping a word. At the nurse's shriek, out ran the Czarina, who caught up a stick and began to beat the governess violently with

it, accusing her of complicity with the murderers. Frantic with grief, she called her brothers, to show them the dead child, and threw all the responsibility for the deed upon the treasurer, Bitiagovski.

As usual, one of the three uncles, Michael Nagi, was drunk. He ordered the alarm-bell to be tolled. Believing it was for fire, everybody came at the run. The Czarina showed the dead prince, the governess swooned under the caning, and as Bitiagovski joined the spectators, accompanied by his son and gentlemen, she declared:

"There you see the assassins!"

Bitiagovski tried to defend himself, alleging that the child had cut himself during an epileptic fit, to which he was subject; but to all his denials and plausible explanations the mother replied by the sentence of accusation, hate, and sorrow:

"Behold the murderer!"

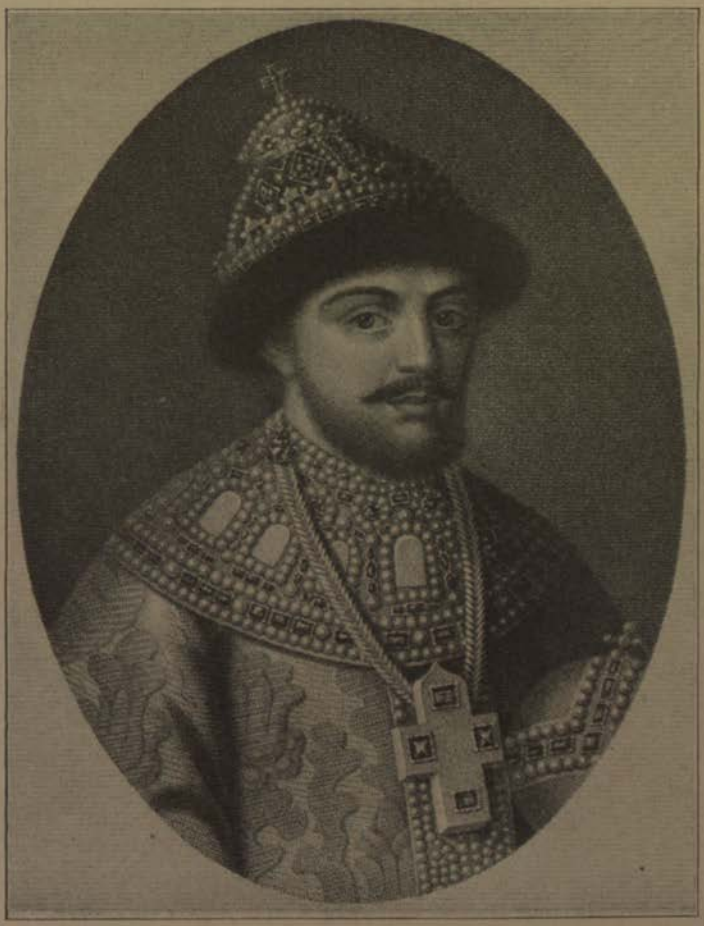
The treasurer saw that reasoning was useless, and that the twenty arms raised against him would not be lenient. He ran into the nearest doorway, one of a detached outbuilding, and barred them out; but the door was staved in, and, after just a short defence, he was killed under knives, clubs, and forks. His son was cut to pieces by his side.

The exasperation ran so high that one of the governess's serfs, who had tried to replace a cap snatched off her by one of the Nagis as a token of degradation, was killed and torn to pieces. The governess's son

was slain under her eyes, as she returned to her senses. Some priests saved the daughters of the treasurer.

The tidings of this butchery reached Moscow, where the Czar Feodor declared that he would go down to Uglitch to inquire into it.

As he was leaving, Boris ordered a part of the city to be set fire; the alarm of "Moscow burns!" resounded in the king's ears, and he turned to see his chief city in flames. He wavered and turned inside the walls, as he might by his presence save his capital, but he could not save his brother, already dead. And Godunof undertook to manage the inquiry and punish the guilty. The inquest remains recorded and the papers in the original exist in the archives at Moscow; but historians allege that no faith can be put in documents written under the pressure of a minister so mighty as Boris Godunof. In the statement, however, it appeared that the young Demetrius killed himself with the blade he was playing with. All the accusations lodged by the Czarina and her brothers against Bitiagovski and his children were the result of folly or hatred. This judgment was solemnly delivered. The Dowager Czarina, under the name of Marfa, was condemned to go into retirement in the St. Nicholas Nunnery, by Tcherepovetz; her two brothers, Michael and Gregory, were exiled from the capital to a distance of five hundred miles; two hundred of the inhabitants of Uglitch, after all were styled rebels, were tortured to death, and a hundred others, their



CZAR FEODOR.

tongues cut out, were flung into dungeons. Under the weight of terror, the population dispersed, and the thirty thousand souls dwindled down to eight. They were driven into Siberia, where they founded the town of Pelim.

The bell which knelled the alarm was tried, like all connected with the drama, its upshot more dreadful than the outset. It was doomed to constant exile; one of its ears was knocked off, it was knouted, and lost its natural rights — that is, it was forbidden to be rung again! In 1847, however, the Uglitchese petitioned to be allowed a bell, and, the mercy being granted, the news was transmitted to Siberia, where the exiles' descendants were informed of the restoration. The bell was found at Irkutsk, where there was great rejoicing; the bishop reconsecrated it, and the exiles proposed, after decorating it with flowers, to escort it back to its old perch. But they had not foreseen one thing, — where were the funds to come from for its thousand-league journey? When it was ciphered out that it would cost some ten or twelve thousand rubles, no one would proceed; and the bell remains, blessed but banished. But its employment was warranted, and it rings nowadays whenever a convict is liberated, a joy-bell if ever there was one.

Having recounted the historical facts resulting from the inquiry into the Demetrius fatality, let us tell the legend accompanying it; it is based on the axiom, "To find the guilty, seek who profits by the deed."

The only man who had an interest in young Demetrius dying was Godunof, — hence he is accused, and the voice of the people rose against him.

Since a long while the Czarina had suspected regicidal intentions, and watched her son. Nikon, the annalist, positively says that several baffled attempts to poison the Prince Demetrius were made. Seeing that poison did not work, Boris had recourse to the steel. Looking for assassins, Czar Feodor's page brought him a ready man; it was Bitiagovski, who, for lucre, agreed, with his son and nephew, to kill the heir apparent. But as three murderers were not enough to slay a boy, they added to their ranks the governess's son, Osip Volokhof, and a gentleman named Tretiatikof. This band won over the governess to stand neutral, and one Vasilissa promised to draw the Czarina aside.

The boy was alone at the instant on the palace steps when the band was lurking. Volokhof went up to him, and, taking hold of his collar to loosen it and allow the steel to find its way, said:

"Is this a new collar your Highness is wearing?"

"Nay, it's an old one," replied the youth.

Scarcely had he uttered the words before he felt the wound, and raised a slight cry, as this wound was trivial. At this, the other bravoes ran up and finished him. The sexton was on the lookout, and ran up into the belfry, where he rang the bell.

The two stories tally so far. The reader is free

to adopt one or the other, or accept the third, on which is established the claim of the false Demetrius. But, anyway, the popular voice accuses Boris of complicity.

Some time after this tragedy Czarina Irene gave birth to a girl. The law conceding the succession to females was not existent. Boris was accused of having put away a boy, really born, and substituted a girl; then, as she did not live, he was held to have had her poisoned.

In 1588, Feodor dying, or, more truly, dying off, — a death long foreseen, — Boris was inevitably designated as the murderer. Something like the terrible Macbeth legend lies in this fatality pursuing the remnants of the house of Rurik, and in Boris's progress to the throne. He assembled three magicians and consulted them.

"Thou shalt reign," said one.

"Good!" said the consulter, at the height of gladness.

"But for seven years only," went on the soothsayers.

"What matters the duration! Seven days will suffice so long as I reign!" retorted Boris.

In the Red Church, built a hundred years after the tragedy, is preserved the silver tomb in which were placed the young prince's remains. On a brass platter, in a shallow vessel, is some earth, said to be blood-dyed when the victim fell; at each corner held by clasps

is a nut, the four being from among those he was playing with when stabbed. The question arises why the veneration for such relics, and what interest the usurper Boris had in making the death so visible to all eyes? The policy was clear; his act assumed the mask of piety. He wanted the death of the heir to be public and assured, as it cleared his way to the throne. His genius may have foreseen the false Demetrius, and he wished to shut out all chance of profiting by public credulity. But he had not gone far enough that way.

At the close of a famine and a plague, which desolated Russia from 1601 to 1603, — afflictions which the Russians obstinately regarded to be a sign of the usurper's fall, — a rumour out of the Lithuanian border spread itself with frightful rapidity through all the provinces.

The Czarowitch, murdered at Uglitch, was alive and had been seen in Poland!

This Demetrius was now a youth of twenty-two, just the age of the prince by this; he was not tall, but he had Ivan's broad shoulders, with his mother's swarthy complexion; his face was broad, with a coarse nose, high cheekbones, thick lips, and two warts on his face. He had red hair and little beard. The warts were on the forehead and under the eye, respectively. "Painted without the warts," he would not have been identified, for he founded his recognition on the disfigurement.

The story of the discovery of the hidden prince came about as follows:

One day, at Brahin, when Prince Adam Viszniowiski was taking his bath, his young valet, who recently entered his service, bungled an order he had received. The prince was irritable, and, like all the lords of his era, quick with the hand. He gave him a box on the ear and called him a dog, a familiar epithet among the Turks, Poles, and Russians. The young domestic drew back a step, and, instead of complaining otherwise, said, gently:

"Oh, Prince Adam, if you knew who I am, you would not treat me so! But as I am your servant I have nothing to say."

"Who are you, and whence?" demanded the Pole.

"I am the Czarowitch Demetrius, son of Czar Ivan the Great."

"You the Prince Dmitri?" sneered the prince. "Tell your tale to the gossips. We know that the little prince was murdered long ago at Uglitch, by orders of the Regent Boris Godunof!"

"You and all the rest of the world are mistaken," persisted the young man; "and the proof is that my father Ivan's son is before your eyes."

The startled noble requiring an explanation, this was given him:

Bent on ridding himself of the heir, Boris had summoned a doctor named Simonet, a Wallach, and offered him considerable money to do away with

Prince Demetrius. The good doctor was on the other side, and, while pretending to enter into the scheme, informed the Czarina. Consequently, on the night fixed for the murder, for the pretender held to it that the event happened after dark, the Czarowitch was hidden behind the stove, — the stove in Russian and north country houses is a structure of earthenware, which takes the place in their tales of the Old Oak Chest, — while a serf-boy was placed in his bed.

This was the youth who was stabbed, and the Czarowitch, from his hiding-place, witnessed the tragedy. In the midst of the confusion following the act, the doctor took him away. For the first refuge, he guided him to Prince Ivan Mstislavski, in the Ukraine, who on his death had passed him into Lithuania, after having gone as far as Moscow. Thence he had gone to Vologda, leaving it to enter the Viszniowiski household.

As the hearer appeared still to doubt, the young man produced a Russian seal, bearing the arms of the Czarowitch as well as his name, — the Russians attach great weight to family seals, — and a gold cross ornamented with diamonds, which he declared had been given him on his baptism by his godfather, this Prince Ivan Mstislavski. At the sight of these tokens, the prince passed from astonishment to belief, craved pardon for the insult and the cuff, and begged the valet, found to be so exalted, to await him in the outer room while he dressed. When ready to do the

honours, he desired his wife to have a sumptuous supper as to the Czar of Muscovy! His stablemen were to harness six dapple-gray horses, with a footman in rich livery to lead one each. His coachman was to make a suitable carriage ready, and his steward was to fill it with cushions and rugs. Going into the room where the pretender waited, he took him to the window, where he showed him these preparations in progress, and, beckoning in other domestics, whose arms were loaded with brocade caftans, sable pelisses, and weapons of damascened steel, he fell on his knees to him, saying:

"Please your Majesty to accept these trifles, — all I possess is at your service."

The Czarowitch was publicly recognized in this manner:

The prince simply presented him as the son of Ivan the Terrible, and the first time he came out under this title a Russian named Petrovski threw himself at his feet and proclaimed that he clearly recognized the young master, known at Uglitch. Henceforth, all doubts fled, and a court of noble Polanders ranged themselves around the lost prince.

Imagine the effect of all this tale in Moscow, under the reign of a man as universally detested as was Boris Godunof. Further details came flooding in. The young prince, who certainly would claim his throne, appeared perfectly at ease in the grand abodes, rode admirably, was skilful with the pistol and the

sabre, spoke Russ like his mother tongue, and even knew some Latin. It was the education of a gentleman, well brought up.

News came in rapid succession now.

The Polish prince, who had indignantly refused money offered by the regent for the rival, took him to the Sandomir Palatinate, the province of his brother-in-law, George Mnizek. There an old soldier, prisoner to the Russians at Pskof Siege, recognized him. The palatine's daughter fell in love with him. He engaged, in writing, to espouse her when he should be on a sure footing at Moscow.

King Sigismond, the Russians' old foe, welcomed him, gave him as Czarowitch an appanage of forty thousand florins, and authorized the Poles to enlist under his standard. A little army was mustered of these Poles, five or six thousand, nearly double as many Cossacks, and a few hundred Russian exiles. With this force, he marched upon Moscow, where he met Prince Mstislavski, preceding him with over forty thousand daredevils. He gained one battle, but lost a second, whereupon he fled to Pultawa. Here he thwarted the plot of three monks sent by Boris to poison him. He turned over to the mob the nobles to whom the monks were commissioned, and they were shot to death with arrows. He wrote to the usurper that he would be clement with him; if he would hasten to abandon the throne and go into the

cloisters, he would overlook his crimes and take him under his lofty protection.

This insolent pledge reached Boris just as his sister, Irene, who had always blamed his usurpation, died suddenly in a nunnery, and when the people, who fell into the habit of blaming Boris for everything, accused him of poisoning *her*. This fresh accusation and the adventurer's insult struck him a final blow.

On the 13th of April, 1605, he felt unwell at a council of state, staggered after rising, and fell in a swoon. On shortly reviving, he clad himself as a monk, chose a name for a convert, "Bogolup" (or "Pleasant to God"), and called for the holy men. The same day he expired in the bosom of his family. Whereupon, as it was agreed to accuse him of crime up to the last, it was said that he had poisoned himself to escape the vengeance of the rightful prince!

On the 20th of June, 1605, the false Demetrius — who knows but that he was the true one? — presented himself at Moscow gates. Notables of all classes rushed to welcome him and bestowed rich gifts, among which was a great golden platter with bread and salt, token of a vassal's homage to his sovereign. Their speech was blunt and in character with the age:

"All is ready to greet you. Rejoice! Those who wished to eat you cannot even snarl now!"

His entry was splendid. All Moscow came out-of-doors to salute him. He could proceed only at a walk, and the crowd had to be forcibly divided to

let him enter the St. Michael the Archangel Church, where he went to pray at Ivan the Great's tomb. He wept as he kissed the marble, and said, in a high voice:

"Oh, my father, thy orphan reigns, owing all to thy prayers."

At these words, everybody shouted:

"All hail, our Czar Dmitri! This is the son of Ivan the Terrible!"

Eleven months after, while three thousand bells rang the *tocsin,* and by the light of burning houses, with guns roaring and the furious rabble yelling, a defaced and broken-limbed corpse was dragged through the streets; the forehead had been split, the breast opened, and the arms hacked. This carcass was carved upon a hundred tables, so that everybody could see the dismemberment. Then all that could struck the gobbets with a whip or a stone, outraging what was the sum of outrages. This clot was the lately bold and hardy young man who had acquired the throne of Ivan the Great.

For three days the tatters of humanity remained exposed on the market-place. On the third night, it was perceived, with terror, that a blue flame flickered above the wreck. When approached, the flame receded or floated off, to reappear when it was undisturbed. This phenomenon, common to putrefaction, struck the people with deep horror. A merchant begged the leave to bury the body outside the town,

in the Serpukof Cemetery. But, as if all the prodigies were bound to follow this poor mutilation, a storm burst over the procession, and, as it got out of the Rulekho Gate, tore the roof off a tower and with the rubbish blocked the way.

That was not all. Even the holy earth would not receive the wretch for repose. Although nothing but two guileless birds, like doves, had been remarked about the grave, and though such supernaturally sweet music as might be the angels' was heard on the evening of the interment, the pit was found open in the morning, trampled about and empty; on the soil lay the remains at the farther end from the chapel.

Then a cry of "Magic!" arose from the multitude, and it was resolved to be rid of this burden, which was, according to popular belief, a vampire's body.

An enormous pile of wood was gathered, and on it the ghastly load was placed; fire being applied, the whole was reduced to ashes. These ashes were collected with as much care as done in antiquity, when pious solicitude reserved the cinders for the household urn, or the *columbarium* of ancestors. But these ashes were scrupulously collected for another end.

A cannon, loaded with the ashes, was drawn from the city by the same gateway as the false Demetrius had entered in triumph. The muzzle was pointed toward Poland, as thence had come this cursed impostor. The match was applied, and the dust of the man, surely worthy of the station he coveted, was blown to the

winds! But out of this dust sprang up five or six other Demetriuses, and fifteen years of civil war. During this period, — the shame of the Russian nobility, whether old or new, — they, the warriors and the most brilliant of the clergy, in the abyss of mud and blood separating the Rurik dynasty from the Romanoff, all aspired for the throne, — ten or twelve touched it, and three or four dyed it with their gore. I have met many a Russ who believed that all the Demetriuses were false except the first one, whom they cherish as "The Little Dmitri of Uglitch."

CHAPTER III.

THE ROMANCE OF PETER THE GREAT

(1689 - 1725)

As soon as I could start sightseeing in St. Petersburg, I took a carriage and was driven to the sites of three visits I had long planned: the oldest church in the capital, the Little House of Peter the Great, and the Fortress. They are all in the Old Town, on the Neva's right bank, — the old church to the right of the seeker, Peter's first house to the front, and the Citadel to the left. The religious building has no artistic value; but there the first mass was said, and the first *Te Deum* in honour of Czar Peter.

The Little House was the first structure erected by the Neva, and the imperial Jack-of-all-trades was compelled to do this with his own hands. It is a miniature Dutch cot, made of wood, but painted red, and false layer-lines painted in black to lead the whole to be taken for brick. One can see that the aristocratic carpenter took lessons at Saardam. To preserve the historic edifice as long as possible, it has been boxed up in wood and glass, so that the well-covered, thickly painted hut defies sun, wind, and rain.

There is something deeply affecting in the Russians' fashion of preserving every token that may be transmitted to posterity as some proof of the genius of the founder of their empire. There is a great future for those who cherish the past.

An enclosure surrounds the coffer of the First House. Besides the hedge, all is shaded by rows of magnificent linden-trees, then in blossom. In their boughs hummed myriads of bees. They hurried over their spoil; knowing that their work-hours are limited and that flowers come late and winter early. Under the buzzing and in the shade slumbered the guardians, three lowly fellows sleeping with the calm and careless thoroughness of men who have full faith in Heaven to provide.

I sat on a bench in this little garden. Thoughts ought to abound on a seat beneath trees perhaps planted by the great Civilizer when he commenced the city opposite. City and trees have generously thriven. The bees still come to harvest on the flowers; ships as numerous sail about here to load up with sweets of commerce in this haven.

And Peter's spirit hovers over all.

It is alarming to think what Russia would be if his successors had shared the progressive ideas of that genius, a man who built — to endure — towns, forts, ports, fleets, laws, armies, foundries, factories, roads, churches, and a religion, — not to mention his having to destroy sometimes, which gave him more trouble

than to construct. In my pondering hours I resolved to form an idea of this great man.

Peter I. was born at Moscow in 1672.

His father was that Czar of Muscovy, Alexis Michaelowitch, who in his second nuptials married a Nariskine. The Nariskines, like the Rohans of France, did not wish to be princes or dukes; they wished to be the *Nariskines.* But they emblazoned the Russian eagle on their coat of arms. A romantic legend — I am not going to say it is unfounded, though I no more answer for romance than I do for history — runs about this Nariskine lady and how she came to the imperial court.

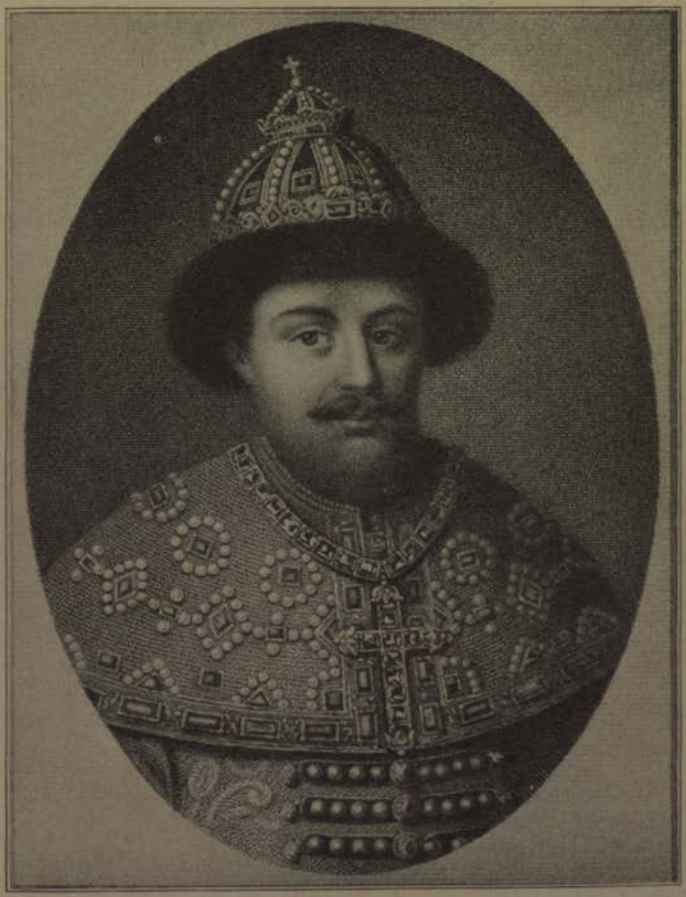
During the rising of the militia, called the Strelitz Home-guard, and its extermination, of which I shall speak at length as connected with Peter, a *boyard* or nobleman, Matheof, was passing through the little hamlet of Kirkino, in the Riazon Government, not far from Mikackof; in this neighbourhood were harboured a number of those land-poor nobles called *Odnovortzki,* meaning "With Nothing but a House." On a house-step, a very pretty maid of twelve or so was weeping her heart out. While the men were changing his horses, the noble inquired what was the cause of such grief. He was told that the only serf belonging to her, and who was her maid-of-all-work as well as tutoress, had hanged herself. Hence the tears, which were not idle, as the noble questioned about her. The young orphan was of a good family of the Crimea;

he took her with him, adopted her as his daughter, and presented her at court. After Czar Alexis became a widower, he noticed the young lady, courted her, and made her his wife.

Is the tradition founded? I have already said that I will not warrant it; but to this day the story is current in Nathalia Kyrile's natal village: "If a silly woman had not hanged herself in Kirkino, there would have been no Peter the Great."

Indeed, Nathalia had only one son, Peter. Michael had by the prior marriage two sons and a daughter. Feodor died in his twenty-third year; Ivan temporarily shared the throne with Peter. Their dual throne is shown: it was founded and chased in Hamburg in massy silver; the seat is parted off into two for the Emperors; in the back is an opening covered with a golden cloth; they say that another seat was there hidden for their sister, Sophia, who, reigning in their names, dictated their replies or orders they were supposed, though too young, to originate. Thrones can tell tales, too.

But the regent sought to clear her path to the throne, whether triple or only double, and Peter's mother saw meet to take him out of the reach of the menace. It was not mere thunder, for the usurper sent the Strelitz soldiery after the couple. The woman might expect at the least immurement in a convent, and for her boy a closer imprisonment, with death a welcome release. Pursued on the highway, she took shelter



CZAR ALEXIS.

in the Trinity Church, and hid Peter under the cloth of an altar. The sanctity of the church would not have protected the two from the ruffians' fury, had not a troop of gentlemen rode into the aisle and dispersed the scoundrels, who fled. Peter remembered that day of fright, and the Strelitz remembered it as well, that day when he slew them by scores and with his own hand cut off a hundred of their heads. It was paying dearly for a scare to a boy and a woman. The Troitza (Trinity) has never lacked for gifts to show the piety and gratitude of the sovereigns. But, in one case, the mutilated tomb, — evidence of a very unholy revenge, — it shows a rarity; but this desecration will be treated as it deserves farther on, when I come to the Lapukine conspiracy against Peter.

Following in the august footsteps, I visited Kolomenskoe, a summer-seat preserving memories of Peter's youth. It holds the falconry where he fed the hawks with his own hands, and four oaks were standing as the academy where he studied under the Deacon Zotof.

At Ismailof he found the little shallop, built by a Dutchman, Brandt, one of a party of foreign mechanics brought into the country by Alexis, with some foresight of Russia becoming a maritime nation. "Great wits jump," and the son had traces of the sire's mode of thinking about amelioration. The elder devotes two articles in his Code to the necessity to dissever the serf from the slave. He forbids the bond-

man being disposed of separately from the ground he was born upon. The penalty is the vague but terrifying "Or it shall be done with you what the Czar orders!" But the abuses flourished, for Peter, in 1719, declares by edict that landed proprietors must stop vexing their serfs, and that the local authorities are to seize them and send them to the capital to be tried by the Senate, while the Czar reserves to himself the liberty to take "the needful measures." A year or two later, Peter orders the Senate to stop the inhuman traffic of selling families in "broken lots," that is, the father parted from the children and the married couple from each other. Later *ukases* compel the landlords to deliver certificates of marriage to the parties contracting, which would show the union was willing and not forced; the penalties are most severe.

Talking of the first skiff Peter saw and which enchanted him, another identified with him was seen on Lake Kletchino, on the Trubege River. The story runs that this village was built just like a village lost to the enemy by Vladimirowitch, and similarly constructed, as well as the river renamed the Trubege. This lake has the singular property of sheltering landlocked herrings. Of all the first Russian fleet which Peter had constructed on this lake, nought remains but the wherry-boat used by him to go from hull to hull. This fleet dated from 1691.

Eager to learn practical matters of navigation, for which the incident of the boat and such wonders of

the art as had penetrated this great Unknown Land had stimulated him, Peter repaid those grand tours of princes of the West by a prolonged stay in Holland and elsewhere. Nothing is more singular or romantic than his working as a 'prentice shipwright in the Netherlands. He returned to suppress the Strelitz, as elsewhere related. He began to see he had a kingdom to work for, if never to be idled in. But what is a country without a capital? Ivan IV., the Great, married the daughter of the Greek Emperor, and chose for arms the double-headed eagle — looking east and west. The symbolism of the eye upon Asia and Europe was clear. But for the eagle to look out upon Europe through its Chinese Wall of barbarism, a peep-hole was needed. Pushkine, the poet, or it may have been Peter himself, called the capital-to-be in the frontier "the window opening on Europe."

St. Petersburg was not even thought of. Its site was a swamp commanded by a Swedish fort, Nienshantz. In 1703 Peter took this fort, and began in a fortnight the founding of the second great city of the empire, — the old one being Moscow, the Great Village, — but destined to be its first.

On Pentecost day, May 27, 1703, it was christened St. Petersburg, in honour of the Czar's patron saint.

Among Peter's city buildings of importance, let us glance at Cronstadt, first styled "Crownstadt," which was built in 1710, and is the seat of the Russian Admiralty. It might have been little under the Peters,

but in our times it is simply impregnable. Admiral Napier, in the Crimean War, saluted it, and held off. It is the northern Gibraltar. Peter had reason to know something of this dangerous channel, when the winds blow on the Baltic and snow-squalls baffle the finest navigator.

Peter was learning the ship-building art at Saardam, when he went aboard a British ship touching there on the way to London. It pleased him so by its trimness, as compared with the Dutch craft, that he was struck with the whim to go to the Thames on board. He was clad like any seaman, and embarked *incognito.* He expected to learn the navigation of a bark after learning its construction. Providence served him to the full. A storm burst upon them to which that assailing Julius Cæsar was a zephyr. It lasted three days. The skipper, his mates, and the crew were at their wits' ends, when, at almost the last moment, a volunteer seized the tiller and ordered a manœuvre, saving the ship.

It was a Frenchman named Villebois, a Breton nobleman of no fortune, who sought "an honest living" in smuggling. Mixed up with the revenue officers on the French coast, where two or three shots were exchanged and a couple of the "preventives" killed, Villebois passed over into England, where he found a berth as warrant officer, upon letters of credit he carried. But Peter saw him in action, which was worth all the letters ever penned, as to seamanship.

He perceived in the volunteer one of those ready men of head and hand wanted by founders and reformers of empires. The danger over, he went to him and shook hands. This familiarity from a sailor-looking fellow wounded the petty noble's pride. He wanted to know who was the tar so fast in making acquaintances. The Russ replied that he was just the Czar of his country. Another would have treated this as a hoax, but Villebois had a keen eye, recognized the lion in the sea-bear's skin, and bowed to the sovereign majesty without hesitation or discussion, like a man who knows his superior and glorifies him wherever he meets him. The Czar appointed him an officer in his navy and his aid-de-camp.

Our Breton had all the faults and virtues of his fellow countrymen, — he was a good officer, brave to ferocity, obstinate to wilfulness; and, fond of drinking, if he did not drink himself under the table, he was apt for any excess. This was so like the Czar Peter that he fairly appreciated Villebois as a boon companion.

In his mad moods Villebois lost all mastery; he had killed three men in such outbreaks. But this was also one of the crimes Peter did not regard as unpardonable; he would overlook that.

Luckily for Villebois, his mania was not always homicidal. One day, when the ruler was at Strelna Castle, in St. Petersburg Bay, he sent the Frenchman with a message to the Empress Catherine, then

at Cronstadt. It was the dead of winter, freezing away below zero; the gulf itself was frozen over. Villebois travelled on a sledge, and defied the cold with heavy furs and a bottle of grog. On arriving at Cronstadt the bottle was empty; this was sobriety for Villebois, so that he appeared quite steady to the guard's officers, to whom he was obliged to present himself before he might have audience with the Empress. Unfortunately, the lady was not in her apartments, and, rather than annoy her by a search, the officer was begged to wait in the anteroom till she arrived. But the heat of the palace, — for Russian rooms are supernally heated in cold weather, — added to the drowsiness from the liquor and the cold, endured in a mass of furs, caused him to seek repose. In the anteroom, all the pages and guards, knowing him as the Czar's own man, paid him no attention. After awhile, rambling as the drunken do, he stole into the inner rooms, and, as chance would have it, blundered into the imperial bedroom, where, all his ideas now centred on sleeping, he incontinently dove into the luxurious couch, enveloped himself in the embroidered satin coverlet, and, in furred boots and all but his helmet, dozed, snored, and surrendered to Morpheus.

In the interval, hearing that a special courier from her husband had arrived, the Empress dropped the affair in hand, and hastened to the reception-room to give him audience. But, unaccountably, the gentle-

man had disappeared. While all were in trepidation at the Emperor's messenger having, apparently, fallen down a trap, — as there are, or were, such things in the palace, — a wild scream, totally foreign to all well-conducted royal residences, rent the warm and perfumed air. One of the Empress's ladies, without knowing of the missing envoy, had stepped into her mistress's sleeping-room. She had at once perceived disarray, and, casting her alarmed eyes on the bed, descried further disorder upon the badly ploughed-up drapery. In fact, the intoxicated captain had thrown himself on the couch as to lay his head where feet usually are placed. On the pillow, therefore, reposed a pair of the enormous furred boots used in Russian winter travelling, while, at the farther extremity, only half-enveloped in the damask and linen, was a flushed and shaggy head, with moustache at odds as to its ends' inclinations, the eyes closed, but the mouth amply open, exhaling a most stentorian and stertorous sound. Considering that the mere intrusion of a man into a royal bedchamber carries the death penalty with it, the horror of the attendant may be imagined. The Empress Anna herself, though pledged not to allow an execution in her realm, had consented to a wretch being tortured so that he could not survive, because he had similarly been caught in her private suite. Villebois was certainly doomed, especially as Peter, to say nothing of Catherine, had no qualms about a head or two being taken off.

Villebois arrested, and making no resistance for reasons not alien to the effect of Dantzic brandy, fatigue from sleighing and heated air, was "laid in lavender" — as the cant expression goes. A rider was sent immediately to the Czar, to relate the awful indignity with as much delicacy as possible. Yet he listened to the account from one end to the other without any mark of anger escaping him.

"Well, what have you done with him?" he inquired, when the tale was terminated.

"Pinioned him in case he sobers and wakes wroth, and lodged him in the guardhouse."

"What has he done since locked up?"

"Resumed sleeping."

"By that I recognize my old Villebois!" chuckled Peter. "I wager that, when he wakes up, he will not know what happened in his stupor. In fact, that stuff they concoct at Dantzic has Indian hemp in it, or I am no judge of liquor." Then to the high astonishment of the messenger, who was a courtier who thought a queen's privacy inviolable and a pillow of an imperial bed like an altar-cloth, he continued, pacing the room more like an embarrassed man than a maddened one: "I suppose we must make an example of him, though the old toper is innocent, having no knowledge of what he did. The Czarina will be furious unless he is reprimanded. Make him row in the galleys, in chains, for a couple of years."

This was done, and Villebois marched off to be

ironed and shipped between the masts. But he had not been there six months before Peter, unable to drink without him, called him back, reëstablished him in his posts, and entreating the Czarina to overlook the insult, treated him with the former trust.

In 1692, while Peter was brooding over conquest, from looking out of his "window" upon Europe, a gentleman arrived from the Neva region. It was one Patkul, from Livonia. The greater part of Livonia, with Esthonia, had been ceded by Poland to King Charles XII., of Sweden, with a stipulation for retention of the privileges of the inhabitants, to which the new master paid no heed. Not only that, but when this John Reginald Patkul, with six other deputies, presented a firm, though respectful, petition, he was condemned to die, while his supporters were clapped into prison. Not waiting for the performance of the sentence, Patkul fled. Profiting by Augustus of Saxony being appointed King of Poland, he appealed to him, reminding him that he had pledged himself, on being so elevated, to restore lost provinces to Poland. Repulsed, he came to Moscow. He reminded Czar Peter that Ingria and Caralie had once belonged to Russia, and that the Swedes had only taken them over during the strife about the false Demetrius. Peter had not forgotten this. Patkul was charged to be the intermediary between the Russians and the Polanders. For greater surety, they induced King Frederick IV. of Denmark to join. Nothing was feared in case of

war, as Charles XII. of Sweden was a youth of eighteen with no military reputation.

Patkul was appointed major-general and sent to besiege Riga. Peter despatched sixty thousand men toward him, some twelve thousand irregulars, by the way, and himself laid siege to Narva, choosing it as it had a port on the Baltic. Frederick, the last to move, mustered his army to join his allies.

But the boy Charles did not give him time to do so; he entered Denmark, and in five weeks rendered Frederick *hors de combat.* He also sent such a help to Riga as raised the siege. He then marched in person upon Narva. Peter was at Novgorod; and Charles, beating a Russian outlying force north of Revel, treated the bulk of the army to the same fate.

Peter was aroused by this thunderbolt. It was hard to believe. Charles, with less than ten thousand men, and only ten guns, had trounced sixty thousand men, having upwards of a hundred and fifty cannon. And the handful had not only beaten the mass, but, after killing seven thousand Russians, they had made twenty-five thousand prisoners. This terrible disaster vibrated among all classes in Russia, — clergy, nobles, and people.

Peter was not downhearted, and even appeared insensible to it.

"I well know," said he, "that we are but scholars to the Swedes; but from being beaten by them we shall learn how to be masters in our turn."

CHARLES XII. OF SWEDEN

rst thing he busied himself about was the Men can be found anywhere; great guns are scarce. Hastening to Moscow, he took the bells from monasteries and churches from all corners, and cast mortars, guns, field-pieces of large calibre, and howitzers, all of which were sent to Pleskof. Then he negotiated with the King of Denmark, who sold him three foot and three cavalry regiments. Returning to Moscow, he sent Repnine with reinforcements to Riga; enrolled, through Patkul, all sorts of swordsmen; built a flotilla on Lake Paypus, to be on the road to Narva, and keep it open; built another on Lake Ladoga, to open the way to Noteburg (afterward Schlusselburg); trained the sailors himself; came nigh to being wrecked on the lake, where storms rage like those at sea; but, like Cæsar, destined for a great enterprise, he braved them and rode through.

While keeping sight of Charles, not yet defined as his due antagonist, and letting him devastate Poland and beat Augustus, he regulated legal forms, instituted colleges, founded factories, and brought in vineyardmen from Spain, builders from Holland, and foundrymen from France, — artisans from everywhere. This did not hinder him from joining by canal the Black and the Caspian Sea, which would by and by connect with the Baltic likewise; to dig the canal running from the Don to the Volga, and that from the Don to the Dwina, which should lead into the Baltic at Riga. True, Riga was not his yet, but it would be

after he had drubbed the Swedish. Meanwhile, the Swedes were drubbing him; but he would have the return game. In fact, each defeat was a lesson. After a course of these war-schoolings, his general beat the Swedes and proved that Charles was not the Invincible. In 1703 other Russian successes followed. It was at Mariendorf, fallen into his general's hands, that the woman to be his queen and the first Catherine was made slave to General Menschikof, and thence passed into his household, as we shall relate in another chapter.

And St. Petersburg was to be piled up. At the very time when he was believed to be engrossed at Moscow with a multiplicity of projects, he suddenly appeared on an islet of the Neva, low, marshy, deserted, unhealthy, where he stamped in the mud and said:

"Here shall be St. Peter's city."

Why there? Whence was this preference for a corrupted and ungrateful soil, under a wild climate, where winter reigns eight parts of the year; where the uneven, shallow, sandy, ice-fretted river allows no war-vessels to reach the open sea unless towed or impelled by machinery? Did he not know that fresh water rots ship timber? Had he not seen that lonely tree, which bore the marks of the freshets and low tides, the differing inundations?

Was it an autocrat's caprice or a vanquisher's folly? It was neither. A man like Peter has no room for

His choice was the result of the most logical
on — the deepest combination.
tacles of nature were but difficulties of detail.
Was it not known that the three most important parts of the world converge on the North Pole, — Asia, Europe, and America? Russia, placed at the junction of their meridians, is of all these natures. The Russian Empire, driven back to the globe's extremity, found itself joined by Bering's Strait to America; by the Caspian Sea with Asia; and with Europe by the Euxine and the Baltic.

By conquest on land and sea, he was going to let his realm enjoy the three worlds; his eagle eye saw at this point in the Neva's marshes, at the pocket of the Gulf of Finland, the reunion of the grand whole.

So he would bring to this centre treasures, merchandise, government, peers, soldiers, traders, the people. The peers would cause trade; the building of his palaces would set the example for their residences; ships would bring seamen and goods; and wood should be floated by the canals and sea to build and for fuel.

He well knew it would be a long and wearying conflict with the elements. He would lose a hundred thousand men; but what did he care — had he not eighteen millions while he planned? And might he not leave thirty millions when he died? And, a hundred years after, would not his successors reign over sixty millions?

The tree of evil augury, because it marked the past, — this Nilometer prophesying the future by the past, — the importunate witness that said that a west wind driving the waters before it would swamp St. Petersburg in a day, — that was felled. Its going let them forget a danger which nothing recalled. A forgotten danger does not exist!

On the 16th of May, 1705, the Czar Peter laid the foundation-stone of the fort around which was to accrue the city. Leaving it to grow, it was time he should play the military, not the civil, engineer.

Narva was besieged, but the Swedish bastions broke all the Russian efforts; then Peter carried them successively, sword in hand. Narva was taken; it was undergoing the standard fate of taken towns, when Peter flung himself among the pillagers, his own soldiers.

"Butchers and plunderers!" he reproached, and cut down the foremost. In the calm he established, Count Horn was brought before him. He was the commandant who had held out to the last. Peter let his anger blaze up again, and struck him in the face with his sword-pommel.

"You are the cause of this misery!" he said. "Ought you not to have surrendered, knowing that you could not be relieved?" He showed him his streaming blade. "Thanks to Heaven, this blood is not Swedish, but Russian, and it has saved the in-

habitants of this hapless city! Your obstinacy sacrificed them!"

To his troops he said: "We have managed to beat the Swedes two to one! Let us hope that, one day, they will teach us how to beat them one to one!"

Offering peace to Charles, the reply was: "When we are at Moscow together!"

"Oho!" cried Peter, "my brother Charles wishes to pose as Alexander; he will not find a Darius in me!"

Charles would not believe in the victory.

"My riding-whip will suffice to lash not only this mongrel Muscovite from Moscow, but the entire world as well!"

Finally he deigned to march in person against this dust which his breath had raised in agitation.

At Grodno a success seemed to prove him right; but at the Bibitch crossing a bloody and weighty struggle took place; lastly, within Old Russian soil, near Mohilef, Galitzin repulsed his vanguard, which never before had flinched. This unexpected resistance irritated this new "Charles the Rash"; he fell upon the Russian army with only six horse regiments and four thousand foot. The Muscovites were retiring, and he chased them into sunken roads; a troop of Kalmucks pestered him, their lances all but reaching him. Fighting beside him, two aids fell; his charger bent under five wounds and collapsed; a squire leading up a relay was killed with it. Surrounded by only a

few officers, Charles fought on foot. After having killed twelve men with his own hand, his support was reduced to five men, who were quickly cut down one after the other.

He was about to be buried under the dead, when, all at once, a captain with his company cut through the Tartars and freed the king, who mounted a horse and fell upon the Kalmucks, whom he pursued for four miles, harassed as he was. His habitual good luck had not abandoned him; amid the terrible *mêlée* he had not received a scratch; but the Czar was right in saying: "Charles is teaching us how to wage war."

Still the fright was sharp in Moscow. Charles had gained Smolensko, only two hundred miles away. But there madness seized the vanquisher. To the army's high astonishment, he quitted the Moscow road, and plunged into the south with fifteen days' rations. He ordered General Loewenhaupt to join his twenty thousand men with fifteen thousand Swedes, amply provisioned. He could conquer the world with an army double the great Alexander's. Were not the Swedes the Macedonians of the century?

He meant to take the Ukraine where Mazeppa awaited him; then he would return to sleep in Moscow. What blindness smote him? Was it Patkul's phantom? For he had had that patriot executed and quartered, against all justice, and from that date he no longer stood in the Almighty Hand.

Yet his fortune threw a beam on him, at the Besua, an affluent of the Dnieper. The King of Sweden had arrived there, exhausted with weariness and hunger. But a corps of eight hundred Muscovites were watching from the other bank, — they would rest by crushing them. So rugged were the banks that the Swedes had to swing themselves down by ropes; they swam the current and repulsed the enemy, who left them the way. Charles was a lost man; if vanquished, he would have retreated and avoided Pultawa which awaited him.

Under Moscow's walls, Peter saw with glee mingled with amaze this foe losing himself in the low country, astray in the woods, leaving men and horses, while Loewenhaupt's contingent would not be able to overtake him. The latter had with him a supply-train of eight thousand carts, laden with provisions, ammunition, and money raised in Lithuania, together with cannon. He was forty or fifty miles within the Ukraine road when, where the Proina and the Sossa join to rush into the Dnieper, near Tcherikof, the Czar appeared with forty thousand men. Instead of entrenching and waiting for the Russians, Loewenhaupt marched his sixteen thousand toward them. Were they not accustomed to fight five to one? The onset was terrific; fifteen hundred Muscovites fell, never to rise again.

Peter saw confusion spread in his ranks; he and Russia were lost if Loewenhaupt joined Charles with

a victorious army. Running to the rear-guard and forming a line, Cossacks and Kalmucks, he called out:

"Kill any one who flees, and me — if I am such a coward!"

Returning to the front, he took the command, rallied them, and offered battle to the convoy train. But Loewenhaupt had orders to join his chief, and not to fight. He bore the honours so far, hence he refused to combat, and resumed the route. It was Peter's turn to be the aggressor. He caught up with the Swedes in a day while they were skirting a morass. He attacked them on all sides. They faced, also, in all directions, and fought for three hours; they lost two thousand men to the Muscovites' five. Neither drew back a foot, but the indecisive result was a victory to Peter.

At four o'clock, as fatigue was calling a halt, General Baico came up with six thousand men for the Czar. Putting himself at the head of the fresh troops, Peter hurled them upon the Swedes, and the action went on into night. But numbers won. The Swedish were thrown back, broken, among their wagons. There they rallied and stood, nine thousand available, almost. Seven thousand had been slain or wounded during the three onslaughts. The remnant kept up the battle front. Peter also passed the night under arms. Officers and men, under penalty of the former being broken and the latter being shot, were forbidden

to leave the camp to strip and rob the dead, as was their right.

In the dark, Loewenhaupt spiked the guns he could not drag off, burnt the camp furniture, and retired to a height. Peter ran in to put out the fire in time and save four thousand carts. He offered the Swedes a fifth encounter and an honourable capitulation. The other refused the latter and accepted the fight. The battle went on all day. Loewenhaupt, at night, passed over the Sossa with four thousand men left with him; he had lost twelve thousand in five times thrusting off forty thousand, having been repulsed but not overthrown — crushed but not beaten. This resistance, though in enemies, created admiration with despair in Peter. He had lost ten thousand in the five collisions, and the foe had slipped through his hands. But the outcome was two undecided days and three victories.

Loewenhaupt regained the king with four thousand men, but did not bring the reinforcements, the provisions, or the munitions to those who lacked them all.

No more communications with Poland; all around a hostile country and an active enemy; finally the winter, — the frightful winter of 1709, to which only that of 1812 can be likened.

Charles lost two thousand men on the steppes, whence his cavalry limped forth without horses and the foot-soldiers without shoes. Part of the artillery was sunk in the bogs, — there were no horses to drag

them out. In short, he had twenty-four thousand men left him, but dragged out and dying of want. But they were Swedes, and they recuperated when they heard the gun-fire. The lame and ailing stood up with the army; but, as fighting was renewed from February, by April the king could see but eighteen thousand of his braves.

But they were nearing Pultawa. Charles bought of a Tartar khan some thousands of Wallachs, and, with his remaining Swedes, besieged this town. It contained stores of all kinds, and he was bound to take it. It was the more necessary as winter was due — an ally of Peter the Czar, who was coming up seventy thousand strong.

Charles undertook the siege operations personally. During an exchange of musketry, a bullet — one of those paltry little lumps of lead which not only determine human life but imperil destinies — followed the line traced on high, and shattered the king's heel bone. This Achilles did not wince: he was of the school of the Greek philosopher who said: "Pain! you are not an ill!"

He kept in the saddle six hours without anybody near him being aware he was stricken, so far from crying out was he. But a groom noticed, then, that his boot was overflowing with blood. He was made to dismount and the boot was cut off, when it was decided to cut off the leg.

To dismember a monarch like Charles was tanta-

mount to striking off his head. A surgeon had the boldness to declare against amputation and take the responsibility of another operation, which was to make deep gashes so as to extract all the flinders of bone. Charles held the limb under the knife. The king gave an order for an assault on the morrow, but, at the time, a spy reported that the Czar was in sight.

"Very well!" said Charles, without a tremor. "We shall beat the Czar, and, after that, take Pultawa."

Fatigued with the operation, he slept soundly till daybreak. It was the 8th of July, 1709.

The sun was rising to illumine a famous battle-field, where Charles, with nine years of victories, was pitted against Peter, with twelve years of toil, cares, and struggles.

If Charles were slain, it would be but one man the less. If Peter, civilization would recede and an empire crumble.

A little out of Pultawa, you will see a hillock under thirty feet high; it is the tumulus of the Swedish army — in which is buried Charles's glory. On this very spot, the battle-ground, Peter, covered with dust and blood, but with the halo of glory around his brow, was enabled to hail his victorious army.

"I salute ye, soldiers!" he said; "the dearest sons of my heart! You whom I moulded with the sweat of my brow, you who are the sinews of the country, and as indispensable to it as the body to the soul which animates it!"

Leaving Charles in his senseless rage, he carried the victory of Pultawa into Poland, Prussia, and Denmark, making Stanislaus descend from the throne, and ceding Poland to Augustus of Saxony.

Charles might as well have been buried in his soldiers' sepulchre. He never recovered from Pultawa.

The political weakness of Sweden gave the victor a little respite. He might again quit home, and renew acquaintance with Europe in art and graces, so bright to him on the previous occasion. He would take the Czarina Catherine with him, his good genius, as he called her. But she could hardly see France at her best, as etiquette opposed it. The little monarch Louis XV. could not receive the servant girl, become Empress, on a footing of equality. The Czar had an interview, of course. In his former visit he had commented on the other Great Monarch.

"Louis XIV. is greater than I in many points. But I have done more than he, if only in reducing my clergy to peace and obedience; he lets *his* domineer over him."

He alluded to his declaring, when the Patriarch Adrian died, that there should be no longer a spiritual chief as well as a temporal one in Russia. Parallel it with his remark at Westminster Hall, on counting the barristers. "Lawyers? so many? Well, I have a couple at home, and, when I return, I think I shall hang one of them!"

He had uttered, at Richelieu's tomb, the grandest

eulogy a prime minister ever drew from any sovereign: "Oh, I would have given thee, thou great man, half my kingdom to have thee manage the other!"

Always in keeping with himself, he had refused the young king's hospitality, the palace prepared for him, the homage, the luxuries which he disdained. He took refuge in a small house, saying:

"I am a soldier; a hunk of bread and a pot of beer suit me. I prefer cosy rooms to grand apartments; I do not wish to strut about with pomp, or give anybody trouble."

Then, prophet by sixty years ahead, he said, on quitting Versailles:

"I grieve for France and her little king, who, I see, will lose his kingdom by luxury and superfluities."

News more dreadful than that which spoiled his first tour interrupted the second. Before, it was that the Strelitz and the Princess Sophia conspired against him; now, that his son, the Czarowitch Alexis, and his wife, the Czarina Eudoxie Feodorowna Lapukine, were conspiring. Peter had tried to have his marriage dissolved, but the jurists and the clergy could not see any way to do so. He sent his wife into a nunnery, where he compelled her to take the veil. But the Czarina Eudoxie was not so thickly veiled that she could not see, or so closely walled in that friends could not enter to see her.

A gentleman in Rostof Province, of the name of

Gleboff, had a brother, an archdeacon, exercising the entry to the religious house. He covered his brother's having a conference with the repudiated Empress. If there were any love in the matter at first, it rose or degenerated into political intrigue. The plot was to depose or assassinate Peter and set the heir Alexis on the throne. It was discovered.

The Czarina was flogged with rods and shut up in Schlusselburg. Gleboff was impaled and set on a scaffold, of which the four corners were occupied by his brother, the priest, Abraham Lapukine, the Czarina's brother, and two nobles who had participated in the crime.

Another Lapukine was lucky enough to get clear away, and, cloaking himself as a monk, he was hidden in Trinity Church, where he died, and even had a monument erected to him. They little knew Peter who thought that the dead themselves could be concealed from his wrath. Time came when he learned of this sequestration of an enemy. He demanded of the chief priest that the corpse should be disinterred and given up to his vengeance. But the high priest remonstrated, and the compromise was that Peter might decapitate the monument. So you will see, as I have, on the marble, at the height of a man's neck, the cut of the saw with which Peter decapitated in effigy the man who had eluded his ire.

"When fire meets straw, it consumes it; when it meets iron, the iron puts it out," said the Czar.

Learning that, at night, Gleboff had survived the horrible agony some twelve hours, he went in a carriage to the spot. He went up to the lingering sufferer, from whom torture had not wrung a word, and exhorted him at that moment to tell the truth.

"Draw nigh that I may speak it, and to you alone," muttered Gleboff.

Peter went nearer, and the man spat in his face.

"Fool!" hissed he; "do you think that, having nothing to say when you promised me life in exchange for my confession, I am such a blockhead as to speak when all your power could not save my life?"

The master retired, vanquished, with a raging heart.

There was still the son, Alexis, the mother's accomplice and an eternal plotter. Since long Peter had not regarded him as his heir, for he had, on venturing a battle on the Pruth, enjoined the Senate to choose the worthiest for his throne. The young prince was tried and condemned to death, July 6, 1718. The next day, the population stirred, and, amid calls in favour of Alexis, a deputation humbly implored the Czar to grant him mercy.

"Well," returned Peter, "I grant him mercy; go and announce the good tidings!"

Then he called his doctor, while they were speeding to the prison.

"Doctor, you know how nervous the Czarowitch is! As he does not expect mercy, this relief may cause a fatal emotion. Go you and bleed him plenti-

fully! At all four limbs!" added Peter, with a voice through which pierced all the hatred held for the unfortunate prince, whom maternal advice had drawn into an impious and sacrilegious contest.

Two hours afterward the Czarowitch was dead.

Son or stranger, all ought to fall before this man of superhuman passions, if they dared to withstand him.

Either the son lived and the work would fall, or the son dying, the work would go on. The work has gone on. The Russian Empire, springing shapeless from Peter the Great's hands, covers this day a third of the globe, and glorifies its founder in thirty tongues: while Alexis Petrowitch, lost in a corner of the Saints Peter and Paul Church, sleeps in six feet of earth.

But the heart of Peter, as firm as Brutus's about a son's death, broke at the unfaithfulness of a woman.

One day, he was told that she had deceived him — the Lithuanian peasant slave, Catherine, whom he had made his wife and his queen. She had sat, crowned and consecrated like to him, on the throne ensanguined by so many monstrous executions, and she should have trembled if she did not love.

His rival was a favourite, the chamberlain, Moens de Lacroix.

He would not believe this at the first, though the story came by his confidential man, Jagavschinski, known as "the Czar's Eye." The Emperor stooped to playing the spy himself, and became convinced.

Early one morning, he entered the rooms of the Prince Repnine in the imperial palace, and waking him, but not letting him rise and dress, related what he had heard and personally learnt, and said:

"I have resolved to have the Empress's head cut off."

Repnine implored him not to do so, for the sake of his two daughters.

"You would disgrace the Princesses Anna and Elizabeth; you would put their pedigree in doubt."

"But methought I was master!" sighed Peter.

"So, do as you will!" rejoined the general.

The Czar went off without a further word.

Lacroix was arrested, as was also his sister, for having played the watchman for the guilty. During the trial, the monarch had fits of rage, like madness. One evening, returning from the fortress, where the examination was proceeding, he flew into the princesses' apartments without any intimation, and walked up and down for a time, while they pretended to go on with their needlework; he was pale as death, and shivered all over spasmodically; he did not speak a word; but he fixed his eyes terribly, threateningly, and vengefully on the young ladies. They quitted the room, tremulous with fright. Their French teacher, a young woman, had crept underneath the table and held her breath, motionless. She saw him draw and dash back in its scabbard a hunting-knife; he stamped, struck things with his fist, smashed all the furniture

on which he could lay hand, and finally rushed forth, slamming the door so hard that he broke it.

Lacroix was doomed to death; his sister to be knouted, a torture the Czar inflicted with his own hand. After that, she was sent into Siberia — the great unfilled pit for such offenders — and others.

In November, 1724, Lacroix, after full confession, was pronounced guilty of treason, conspiracy, and concurrence in villainy, and it was settled that his head should be cut off. He marched to his fate like a martyr. He had kept a small bracelet in diamonds, given him by the faulty lady; he had slipped it into his garter when taken, and preserved it through his trial and march to the scaffold. There he gave it to the Lutheran pastor attending, with entreaty to return it to the Empress.

Peter watched the execution from a palace window; he ran out and, going up the planks, lifted the head by the hair and boxed the ears.

Going back to the palace, he addressed Catherine, asking her ironically to come for "a drive in the carriage."

Though suspecting some horrible goal, she obeyed, not daring to refuse. In the open carriage he conducted her to the scaffold, where the head, set on a pike, had been stuck up so that the lady was made to brush the dripping with her dress; some drops of blood were smeared on it. But she did not flinch; her marble brow betrayed not the slightest emotion.

Thenceforward, all relations ceased between the imperial couple.

Peter never saw her again, save in public. He threw the will made in her favour into the fire, and, having sent one wife into the convent, he let it be supposed that the second would follow.

His joyous spirit had sustained the worn-out frame, but the broken heart was the mainspring gone — it killed him. The English Doctor Atkins was asked, "Why do you not cure our master?" and replied, "How heal a man who carries in him the Legion of Luxury?"

Catherine had lost no time in being ungrateful, as she betrayed him four months after he had published her as Czarina and inheritress of the crown, — and he had crowned her, — an unheard-of event in Russia, where never had a woman been so honoured. He had praised her as "not merely a wife, but a friend; not merely a woman on the hearth, but a man at the council-board!" The natural return was such as a cynic might hope for and rely upon; as soon as she had all she might count upon, she would give nothing back. Besides, the Czar's death alone could raise her a step, — high as might be her throne, her tomb would be higher still.

To this real crime, romance, if not history, adds a supposititious one. On the death of Peter, she and Menschikof were accused of having poisoned him, — two for whom he had done more than all, except

Russia and her children. But it is divine justice that one who evades punishment for a real crime should be laden with the burden of a fictitious one.

Peter's death came in his fifty-second year. From 1722 he had been ill, but never admitted a pain until the mortal one struck him. He knew he must die, but would not let others suppose it possible.

The Lacroix catastrophe gave the mercy-stroke. For three months he lay in anguish on the rack. His will righted him, like a ship returning to the even keel after being careened; like a pale captive, snapping his chain and bursting out of a dungeon, he sprang, though bowed, out of the sick-room. But where go, in the autumn, fatal in St. Petersburg to the strongest constitutions? Into the marsh-lands, where the canal was being cut to join the Asian waters with the European. The old warrior, Count Munich, was affrighted by this bent, suffering, and enfeebled ghost, aiming to make this fetid and muddy country wholesome and beneficial — the very kingdom of fever.

But Peter said: "This canal will nourish St. Petersburg and Cronstadt; it will furnish building material for them; it will bring them all our fabrications and products; with Russian trade will prosper all the commerce. My place is here!"

The canal under way, he travelled to the salt-works, then in Finland, and in midwinter reached Lake Lachta, amid a fearful tempest, but he was saved; a cabin offered shelter and a stove its heat. He cast

a look on that body of water which he had subjugated as he had the Steppes, the Turks, the Swedes, and the Danes, and he might smile at his triumph. But what did he see? A flatboat floundering in the quicksands, full of soldiers and seamen. Bewildered by fright, they would sink. Peter ran out to the shore edge and called out the movements they ought to make. But his voice was lost in the uproar of the gale and the men's clamour. Peter ordered help to be sent, but those he addressed wavered. Forgetting the danger to himself as an invalid, he jumped into a boat. As he could not row it, he leaped in and swam to the barge. Taking the helmsman's place, he steered them safely to the shore.

But the fever gripped him that night and clenched its claws in his innermost vitals, so that he was carried, dying, back to St. Petersburg. He was never to rise from his death-bed. Yet he issued his final orders. Nay, he did rise once — for the Blessing of the Neva in mid-January, 1725, braving the bitter climate and his keen tortures. He who had slain superstition yielded to being pious! On the 19th, overcome by the ineffectuality of the host of doctors from all parts, ashamed of himself, he ejaculated:

"What a miserable animal is the man in me!"

In another week he acknowledged himself vanquished; he paid his debts, released prisoners, and prayed:

"I trust that God will show me some clemency for the good I have done my people!"

He died at the end of the month, exhausted by excesses; he that had known how to bridle others could not draw the rein tightly for himself.

But his memory abides. Counter to the habit of peoples, his have been grateful for the welfare he provided them with.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ROMANCE OF THE STRELITZ GUARD

(1689 - 1705)

If there be a lesson for monarchs to derive from the behaviour of their household troops, it is that in leaning upon them they rely on a yielding reed. The story of the Prætorian Guards, the Mamelukes, and the Janizaries unite to tell them that.

In 1612, when the situation seemed desperate in Russia, three men arose to restore hope. They were Minine for the masses, Pojarski for the nobility, and Romanoff for the clergy. The last one was that Metropolitan, twice prisoner to the Poles, but ever upholding his country in chains and facing death, so fully representing Russian nationality that all Russians rallied around him, and out of his family Russia chose her ruler. And yet this sovereign was of alien breed.

Tradition will not allow that the Romanoff stem sprang from Russian soil.

In 1350, an obscure Prussian settled on the Volga banks. His son married into the Schemeretef family, one of the most illustrious. Another was brother of the Empress Anastasia, mother of Feodor, last Czar

of the Rurik blood. Lastly, the only one escaping massacre and the family's exile, — hunted by Godunoff, who seemed to foresee his future, — a Romanoff turned monk, had issue, that Michael whom Russia made Czar in 1613.

The house at Kostroma, where he learnt of his election, exists as an object of veneration to Russians, who proudly show it to foreigners. From the clouded stem has spread and struck root, during two hundred years, such a tree, that in sap and leaf it is thoroughly Russian.

Michael Romanoff reigned from 1613 to 1645, and his son Alexis to 1676.

He left by his first marriage two princes and six princesses; by a second, Peter (to be Peter I.) and the Princess Nathalia.

But the Princess Sophia, of the first marriage, a virile and ambitious spirit, seeing that one brother could not reign on account of incapacity, and another on account of his youth, resolved to take the sceptre. She had simply to shelve Peter and reign for Ivan.

Circumstances were favourable.

Two days after the Czar Feodor's obsequies were celebrated, the Strelitz, the Muscovite militia, flew to arms at the Kremlin, complaining of nine of their colonels for cheating them out of their pay. The officers were cashiered and the men received their money. But that was not enough. They captured these officers, beat them with rods, and, in the Oriental

GRAND DUCHESS SOPHIA.

manner, made them beg pardon for having given them the trouble to beat them. Princess Sophia interfered in the height of this sedition. She sent the Strelitz a list of forty nobles whom she denounced as enemies of the country. Her emissaries averred that one of the two brothers of Czarina Nathalia had taken the Emperor's robe and posed on the throne in it; that this Naryschine meant to strangle the Emperor, and that Feodor had not died of weakness, but by poison from a Dutch doctor whom she named. All this was accompanied by presents and promises of a rise in pay to the drunken troopers.

The plotter had nothing to say about Peter, a mere boy of ten, who, she hoped, would disappear in the whirlwind.

At the head of the list were the Lords Dolgoruki and Mattheoff. The mutineers' chiefs broke into their houses and threw them out of the windows, when the pikemen caught them on their points. To punish Ivan Naryschine for the asserted sacrilege, they invaded the palace; but they found none of that race there but Athanase, whom they likewise cast out of the window; when three fugitives on the black list took refuge in a church, the Strelitz rushed in and slew them at the altar base.

Czarina Nathalia comprehended that this work was but preliminary; she caught up her son in her arms, and, quitting the Kremlin, which was the citadel for Moscow, by a side door, fled across the fields.

The Strelitz continued their hideous task. A bystander was killed for Ivan Naryschine. Acknowledging the error, they carried the dead to his father. This Soltikoff was so filled with the terror the swashbucklers kindled, that he thanked them and rewarded them for bringing him his dead. The mother, not having this forbearance, reproached him for his meekness, but he said:

"Wait for the hour of vengeance!"

But though this was spoken in a low voice, a Strelitz overheard it. Calling his comrades back, he grasped the old man by his hair and dragged him down on the threshold, where they slew him.

They went hunting for the Dutch physician, Doctor Vangard, but met only his son.

"Where is your father?" they challenged.

"I do not know."

"Then you shall pay for him!" and they killed him.

They happened to run up against another doctor, who happened to be Dutch, too. He declared that he was not Vangard.

"But you are a doctor? Then you have been the death of many, if not of young Feodor — so die!"

Finally they found Vangard, disguised as a beggar. They hauled him over to the palace. The other princesses — there were six without Nathalia — were friendly to him, and sued for his release; but the mutineers said that he was a sorcerer and deserved death for that, as well as for being a physician. They

had found in his laboratory a stuffed toad and a serpent skin. Is it not by these signs that a wizard is known? Meanwhile, they still wanted Ivan Naryschine, and, as they were sure he was hid in the palace, they declared that they would set fire to it to settle him, with all his friends and abettors.

This frightened his sister and the other ladies. They went to his hiding-place and told him that they could no longer keep his pursuers from him. The young man replied that he was ready to die, but prayed for religious comfort. The patriarch was sent for, and, giving him an image of the Virgin reckoned miraculous, led him, sheltered by the holy emblem, out to the ruffians. But without respect for that, the patriarch, or the princesses, they pitilessly tore Ivan from his hands and drew him down-stairs, to add him to Vangard, both doomed to death.

This death was the Chinese one of "cut into ten thousand morsels," in plain words, hacked to mince. The deathsmen stuck the hands, feet, and heads on pikes and paraded them under the balcony.

In the meantime Sophia had perceived the flight of the Czarina and her son, Peter, and sent the Strelitz after them. The prince and his mother had gone a hundred miles, when they saw the dust whirling up behind them. The shouts showed that they were espied. The woman, resolved to fight for her son's life to the uttermost, dragged him into the first church

with her. It was the Holy Trinity, and it might impose by its majesty upon even these cutthroats.

The boy was on the altar and the mother standing by it, both praying, when the bravoes entered. They broke down a sanctuary door, and one of them seized the prince and raised his sabre, like Abraham's knife over his boy. But this head was predestined; some mounted gentlemen, passing, wheeled, rode inside, and stopped the guardsman's hand. Peter was saved for Russia!

Thereupon, for fear of being accused of fratricide, Sophia proclaimed Peter and Ivan to reign conjointly as Czars, and constituted herself regent.

Czarina Nathalia led her boy to the Kremlin in trembling, but he was treated fairly, like a prince. In that capacity he began to make acquaintances.

Of a little boy who came peddling cakes, he made a favourite, whom he was to retain long. It was Alexander Menschikof, whom we shall meet again. He was also, boylike, enchanted with a boat made by a Dutchman, brought out of Holland in the previous reign. This man manœuvred the boat on water, and Peter became struck with that love for the sea, odd but inevitable to those who learn about it first on dry land. Peter, in his childhood, had been so frightened by a cascade as to fall into a fit on hearing running water; but, to overcome this weakness, he had deliberately thrown himself into the water.

But the Princess Sophia still had her projects. She

sent the Czarlet a hundred miles from Moscow, to a village known as Preobrajenski. A hundred young Russians were assigned to associate with him, not like the fifty elected to consort with Sesostris, or the fifty sons of grandees like Cyrus's Persian *élite,* but as "curled darlings," *mignons,* boon companions. If, as feared, the springall had any genius, debauchery should extinguish it. Peter took with him Menschikof and Brandt, the Dutchman who built the boat and was to continue to demonstrate how man conquered water.

Prudence sent him fresh sustenance. A few days before his departure from Moscow, the Danish resident presented one Lefort as a secretary. He was a Piedmontese of French origin, and came into Russia with one Colonel Western, who had a commission from the Czar Alexis to raise a few soldiers in Belgium. But when the two adventurers arrived, Alexis was dead and the country unsettled. The governor at Archangel had let Western and Lefort, as well as their soldiers, dwell in deepest misery. Each shifted for himself. Amid a thousand dangers, of which the least was starvation, Lefort reached Moscow, where he had applied to Denmark's representative, and was made secretary.

Young Peter thought that he ought to pay his father's obligations. He offered Lefort a post at Preobrajenski. There, under Lefort, the village became a military school, where the fifty body-guardsmen

were officers of a regiment recruited there. It was styled the Preobrajenski Regiment. But, before being officers, the fifty served as soldiers, acted like them, going up through all the grades, and not passing higher until competent.

With his own hands, Peter struck with the mattock and trundled the wheelbarrow to heap up dirt for entrenchments; like the rest, he passed part of the night in watching as sentry; then, as simple sapper and miner, he attacked, with hatchet in grip, the doors he had helped to make.

In the midst of these exercises, hardening his body and fortifying his mind, Peter attained his seventeenth year. He was nearly six feet high and growing; he could sail his boat, go through the manual with any weapon, and use broadaxe, hammer, and chisel with the most skilled carpenter; he could turn wood, carve, and draw; he spoke Dutch and German along with his mother-tongue. With an opportunity, he would reveal himself to all eyes. This opportunity soon came.

In his absence, Princess Sophia had had the imbecile Ivan wedded. Peter protested. At this, six hundred Strelitz were marched against him. Forewarned, Peter assembled his train-band under Lefort, and took refuge with them in that same vault of the Trinity Church, where his life had been saved so wondrously. Here he proclaimed himself Emperor, and called all faithful subjects to him. The *boyars* (or *boyards,*

nobles) hastened to him; the patriarch, seeing on which side his bread was buttered, to use a popular simile, passed over; Princess Sophia was declared a usurper, and Peter triumphantly marched into Moscow at the head of his Preobrajenski Regiment.

The eighteenth century dawned as Peter stepped on the throne. William of Orange reigned in England; Louis XIV. was about to sign the Peace of Ryswick; the Elector of Brandenburg was haggling for the crown of Prussia; Charles XI. was dying; and the famous drinker, Augustus of Saxony, was to displace the Prince of Conti and mount the throne. In Asia, all was over with any attachment to European affairs; the Emperor Leopold had vanquished Mustapha II., though Sobieski had died, despairing of saving Poland.

Russia, turned, under the Rurik line, toward the east, now faced the west. The natural inclination in Northerners to seek light and heat, crossed by the great Tartar invasion, invincibly regained its power. Its frontiers were: the Ural River to the Orient; the line drawn from Kiev to Astrakhan to the south; the Dnieper and the Dwina to the west; to the north, two cities ruined by Ivan the Terrible, Pskof and Novgorod. Farther yet to the north, the White Sea, still vexed for five months of the year, and for the rest motionless and deserted under the frost-king's chains.

Peter inherited a kingdom all dry land, where, a prisoner without outlet, he stood like a lion-tamer, encaged with barbarism, sedition, and violence. First,

he must finish, not merely curb, these wild beasts. Then he must master the northwest, the European sea, but so hyperborean that its shores were uncivilized. Its Gulf of Finland and Riga haven were two vents for escape of the Asiatic mephitic vapours. But these tracts belonged to a warring nation, the most redoubtable of the world, separating Russia from that water. It was defended by forts manned by armies triple to that which Peter might muster. What matters? When the hour should come, Russia would rush at the bull, and, seizing it by the horns, throw it.

But before vanquishing others, Peter ought to rule himself. To teach others, he must know himself; to civilize, he must debarbarize.

He left his realm in faithful hands, — Lefort's; Gordon's, a Scot with all a Scottish reliability; and the old *boyard's,* Romodanovski.

Peter took scalpel, compass, and axe in hand, and made the tour of Europe, as apprentices go the round before becoming a master. Strange example set by one born a despot, and made so by training and nature; commanding a people where the noble is slave of the sovereign, the people the lord's serf, the son his father's slave, the woman the husband's; and yet doing more for the freedom of all these than ever was done by an ancient republican or a modern patriot!

Yet peers, priests, the masses, women and youth, all clung to the hoary barbarism, coarse manners, and

moral darkness, making Russia more of a forest than a realm, says a native author.

Peter did not continue Russia, but recommenced it. On whom would fall the first blows of the imperial athlete? Soldiers, clergy, or lords? On the first that tempted attack.

The most discontented were the native soldiery, the Strelitz. General disturbance could be inferred from their grumbling. Europeanized regiments promised to oust them. Twelve thousand "heretics" were keeping Moscow, the Sacred City, under foreign commanders, while the natives were sent to the border. But the janizaries protested that defending their country was not their business. They were raised to make and unmake Emperors.

Tsikler and Sukanine, two leaders of the militia, fomented a conspiracy, in which the young Czar, recognized intuitively as an irreconcilable enemy, should infallibly lose his life. The Czar dead, they would bring Ivan out of his palace and Sophia out of her prison, and continue under their name the long reign of brutality, orgies, and pillage which is the career of prætorians.

How would the plotters arrive at their goal? Nothing more plain. No playing with a tiger-cub! Set fire to a house; Peter would come a-running, and mix with the crowd to put it out. A stab would finish him, and into the fire with all these outlanders who sullied the sacred soil!

Midnight was the chosen hour.

The bullies assembled at eleven to sup. Strong waters were not spared to give courage to the flinching. But, before that, two of the conspirators weakened. They begged audience of the threatened man and disclosed the regicide.

Peter took his measures, ordering his captain of guards to surround the meeting-place at exactly half-past eleven. When they were ready, he was going to leap into the midst and fix their fate! But impatience caused him to advance the hour. He thought his guards were to be on the spot at eleven, and he to enter at a quarter past. So that he found the partisans completely free, drinking, but with their swords by their sides. It was the Czar who was caught!

Luckily, the lion could wear the fox's skin. With a smile on his lips, he stepped right into the thick of the amazed revellers.

"Comrades," he said, "through the shutters I heard the clinking of glasses! My idea is that you were making merry! Room for one jolly fellow more!"

He seated himself among the party, poured out to himself, and raised his glass.

"To *our* health!" said he.

The intended assassins were forced to drink their victim's health! But soon the surprised men looked at the situation soberly; menacing looks were exchanged; luck had managed things for them better

than they could have arranged. The lamb was of its own impulse under the butcher's steel!

Tsikler bent over to Sukanine, and, half-drawing his dagger from the sheath, whispered:

"Brother, it is time!"

But the other blenched.

"Not yet!" he breathed.

Peter caught this word, and, at the same time, the sound of the soldiers' tramp without, to surround the house.

"Not yet?" repeated he. "If there is no time for you, dog, there is for me!"

And, springing at Sukanine, he felled him with a blow of the fist. A thundering yell of rage burst out; all the mutineers drew their swords. Herculean as was the daring man's strength, he must have succumbed, since there were a score of armed men against one. But the door was flung open, and the guards appeared on the sill.

"At last!" said Peter, with a laugh.

By that the plotters saw that they were outdone. Without trying to defend themselves, they fell on their knees.

"Chains!" said the victor, laconically. He turned to his officer and boxed his ears, saying: "Is this your notion of exactness?"

The captain tranquilly drew the order from his belt. Peter read, "At eleven and a half precisely." He looked at his watch. It was now half-past eleven.

With the rapidity of intelligence, or, rather, of fair play, he acknowledged his wrong, took the officer in his arms, embraced him three times in the Russian manner, proclaimed him true, and set him as custodian over the prisoners.

The wretches were put to torture, not to draw a confession, since they had all been taken red-handed, but to make them suffer all that could befall. They were dismembered, but not allowed to die as long as they had life to feel. Their heads were set on posts, and their limbs adorned the ground beneath.

This execution over, the Czar started out on his travels. With a view to show how far-sighted were his plans, let us say that he wished to conclude peace with the Chinese and make war on the Turks. Both of these wishes he brought about. Between China and Russia, the two most extensive empires on earth, peace was concluded. The contest had been about some Russian forts situated on the Amoor River, the Black Stream of the Tartars and the Dragon of the Celestials. (At my writing, 1858, the Americans propose to build a railroad to the Amoor from Moscow, and to establish a line of steamboats to run on the Amoor to the Sea of Okhotsk, which is the Boreal Ocean. The Emperor refuses: the turbulent "Yankees" disquiet their neighbours.)

As for the Turkish War, it was at a befitting time. Venice was rising; Morosini, who had surrendered Candia, took the Peloponnesus; Leopold had success

in Hungary, and the Polanders contained the Tartars in the Krim. Azof was the key of the Black Sea on the way to Asia. This key taken and put by, the Czar might take that other key — Noteburg of the Baltic, the northern way.

Peter went with the army, but only as a volunteer. Vanquisher at Azof, he made himself captain of bombardiers.

While besieging that place his brother Ivan died, and he was sole master. Sophia was still living, but he had his eye upon her. Not only did he take Azof, but he burnt the Ottoman fleet.

In 1697 he could take his pleasure trip. It was under guise of an embassy. He went as "Count North," with only his valet, a footman, and his negro boy. It was in England that he heard how the Strelitz, whom he thought restricted to the Crimea, had been put into movement by Sophia's machinations, and marched on Moscow. Gordon had beaten them badly in two engagements. Peter's heart leaped for joy.

The terrible militia was wrecked; out of forty thousand, but a paltry seventeen or eighteen thousand were left! They had been carefully decimated by giving them all the foremost places in fighting the Turks. The officers ought to have replaced the losses, but, as their pay was the same whatever the muster, they pocketed the money and let the effective strength run down. Peter had calculated on this greed.

Peter made such diligence in his return that he

passed in at one gate of Moscow while the Strelitz prisoners were pouring in by another. It was the very occasion to finish with the brigands. He had them tried as ordinary assassins. Two thousand were doomed to be hanged and five thousand to lose their heads. This monstrous human *battue* lasted only one day. Peter was expeditious in such massacres. With his own hand he cut off one hundred of the first lot. He had a hundred axes distributed to his courtiers, and he forced them to use them for ten or twelve heads, when he allowed the soldiers to finish the horrible duty.

Only one Strelitz was spared. He was a fine young fellow, named Ivan. He was nicknamed the "Eagle," *Orell.* As he was led up to the block, a corpse impeded the way. He spurned it, saying:

"Get out, it is my turn!"

This coolness impressed Peter.

"Mercy for him!" he called out to the man with the axe. That was not all. Peter placed the saved one in the ranks.

The solitary Strelitz acquired the rank of officer, and that made him a gentleman. His son, Gregory, governor-general at Novgorod, had five sons known as the Orloff brothers. Alexis Orloff was the murderer of Peter III. Gregory was the favourite and almost the husband of Catherine the Great, whom he assisted to reign. The descendant of the Strelitz

spared by Peter the Great was to establish Catherine the Great!

Three others had been spared, it is true, but for a worse fate. They had written an address calling the Princess Sophia to the throne. They were hanged close by the princess's room, one of them holding the petition in his hand, so that his arm dangled in at the window. The order was that the man should hang till the paper dropped. This shock cured the princess of further thoughts of conspiracy, and she asked to retire into a convent. She changed her name, as being of sad note, to Marfa, and died as a nun in 1704.

Some of the Strelitz had got away after the battles. The Czar ordered that no shelter should be given the fugitives, not even food. Their dead bodies were seen strewn on the roads, on the steppes and in the woods. Their relatives were sent into the remotest spots of Russia, with the injunction never to try to come home. To eternalize the memory of this wholesale execution, Peter had pyramids set up on the highways, with inscriptions to testify to the extermination of the Strelitz.

CHAPTER V.

THE ROMANCE OF CINDERELLA THE CZARINA

(CATHERINE I., 1702 - 1727)

IN the year 1702, the Russian general, Schemeretef, beat the Swedish general, Slippenbach, before Derpt, which he took, with four stands of colours — the first such trophies falling to Czar Peter's arms. This proved that King Charles XII. was no longer the Invincible. In the summer of the same year, this same Schemeretef again beat the same Slippenbach, and captured sixteen flags and twenty cannon. This success threw Marienburg into Peter's grasp. The town surrendered at discretion. The people selected their pastor to implore the victor's clemency. This worthy, in the position of suppliant rather than negotiator, sought out Schemeretef, who received him handsomely. But the general noticed in the midst of the family (using the word in the ancient Roman sense of all the household) a remarkably splendid woman, concerning whom he questioned.

Pastor Gluck could tell him that her name was Catherine, but her family name was not known. Indeed, he knew no more about her than she could vaguely recollect.

CZARINA CATHERINE I.

She believed that she was born at Derpt, about 1686. She accounted herself Roman Catholic. She remembered having lived at Derpt until, the plague breaking out in Livonia, her parents fled before the contagion and took refuge near Marienburg. But the pest had marked them for its own; it hunted them down, and, little Catherine's parents dying, they left to the world three tender children, a daughter at Derpt, under a relative's care, and Catherine and her brother, brought with them. A farmer undertook to take charge of the boy, while the three-year-old girl was given to the pastor. But the plague reached the rectory together with the little orphan, for the pastor died, with some of his household. She was again homeless.

Luckily for her, this same Dominie Gluck, then archpriest of the parish, was sent to Marienburg to attend to the wretched. He entered the rectory as the master was breathing the last sigh. The only living thing in the pestiferous habitation was the child, cowering in a corner, who ran to the good man at once, and, plucking him by the gown, called him "father," and, begging for bread, refused to leave him. The good man would not repulse this waif, but took her on his charitable rounds, as none claimed her, and led her away.

On arriving home at Riga, he confided her to his wife, where she grew up beside their two girls, but in the post of kitchen-wench or little better.

She was about sixteen when a young recruit in the Royal Guards of King Charles XII., in garrison at Marienburg, came a-courting her. She was marvellously fair, and, with a view of affording her a warlike protector, the pastor consented to their marriage. But, three days after the wedding, the whole garrison received orders to join the Swedish army, then making war in Poland. As the young wife was left alone and did not know which way to turn to save herself, she came back into the reverend's house, working in the kitchen as before, as if her position had not changed.

We reach the point again when Schemeretef saw the charming handmaid. He exercised his right, as the captain, and took her for his share in the booty. It was vain for the priest and the girl to remonstrate; Catherine was forced to become a servant in the general's house. She wept, for the military circle was very unlike the sacerdotal one.

Catherine had been some seven months in Schemeretef's service when General Menschikof came into Livonia; he was not yet a Russian prince or a noble of the Holy Empire, but he was a great lord and a skilful general, fit to take command of the Russian forces here. He bore the order to Schemeretef to join the Czar in Poland. Schemeretef had to depart instantly, leaving his attendants and taking only what military allowance dictated. Catherine remained with the women discarded. The newcomer noticed her —

as all did — and offered to buy her. The departing chief could not do better than be paid for the useless "baggage." He consented. The serf gained a younger and less stern master by the transfer.

But Menschikof fell in love with the slave, and soon she was giving orders as housekeeper to the establishment.

Things were at this point with the woman when Czar Peter, having made himself master of the Neva's course, arrived at Marienburg, and took up quarters with his commander there. With other servants, Catherine was designated to wait on the royal table. Her beauty made the usual impression; for, after the feast, the guest sent all away and held the host alone. The latter expected that there was going to be a conference on state business, but, to his high astonishment, the first question was:

"Where did you get that slave they call Catherine?"

The general told all that he knew about the woman. The next day, the Czar made a present to the housekeeper of a gold ducat. This was a pretty fee for waiting at table, even at that of royalty, but paltry as a gift from a Czar to a beauty he admired. But Peter came back. He had heard complaints of his general's exactions, and found that they were true. So Menschikof was amazed at his master's intruding upon him one morning without being announced. He was still more so when the ruler drubbed him with

his cane quite vigorously. It was the great man's habit; ten minutes after the thrashing he would forget all about it, and not bear the flagellated one any ill-will. Having administered the correction, he stated the grounds, gave his favourite proof that he was not unjust, and remarked that, as he must live awhile in Livonia, he would go into housekeeping on his own account. But he promised to take dinner twice a week with him, which promise he kept. He dropped in two or three times, in fact, without any particular remark, until all of a sudden he asked:

"By the way, where is that Catherine?"

Menschikof could only stammer the name.

"Yes, I do not see anything of her now. You are not greedy, are you?"

"All here belong to my master and benefactor."

"Well, call the girl! I should like to see her again!"

Catherine came in, blushing and agitated. The host was similarly embarrassed. The Czar noticed the disquiet of both, and joked the woman about it. But, seeing that her reply showed more respect than jocosity, in harmony with his mood, he became thoughtful, waved her away, and affected not to direct a word to her during the rest of the meal. After supper, the strong drink came. The Hebe was Catherine; she brought the tray with liqueur-glasses to the guest. He looked at her a long while, as though he did not perceive what she stood there for.

"Catherine," said he, at last, with a gentleness not his habit, "it seems we are not on as good terms as when I looked in last."

Her eyes dropped and her hand trembled so that the glasses clinked on the tilting tray.

"But I hope we shall make peace! Menschikof," he went on, abruptly turning on the man, "let me tell you that I am going to take this cupbearer with me!"

With him, to say and to do were one; for he rose, and, clapping on his hat, took the woman's hand on his arm and walked out of the house with her to his own habitation.

During two days, Peter saw his general without any reference to any topic but state affairs, but on the third he suddenly said:

"I like the handmaid! You must sell her to me."

The other's heart was aching, so that he could not answer; he restrained himself to bowing deeply, and was retiring, when the despot remarked:

"By the way, I ought to remind you that the poor thing is not overwell clad, and I hope you are going to supply her with a proper wardrobe! I should like her to be suitably 'rigged out.' Do you understand me, Menschikof?"

He uttered the seafaring word emphatically, to give it more value. Menschikof knew his master thoroughly, and how he wanted to be obeyed. So he procured all the clothes which would suit Catherine,

and, joining to them a magnificent casket of jewels, he sent them all to her, with two slaves to be at her beck and call as long as she would keep them. Catherine found these gifts in her room when she went there.

Surprised to the utmost height at seeing what she had not asked for, she went to her new master, and, smiling with the coaxing manner worth a crown, she said:

"I wish you would come as far as my room, for I have something curious to show you."

The Czar followed her, having become as much of her dangler as Menschikof had been. Master was turning into slave. She showed him the package of clothes, and gravely observed:

"I see that I am to remain a long time at your orders, if I am to wear out these garments in your service! It is also proper that your Majesty should see all the riches that befall me!" Laughingly, she opened the parcel and spread the apparel about on the furniture. Wrapped up in the last robe was the jewel-case.

"Oh, oh!" cried she. "This is some error! These were never intended for poor me!"

Curiosity prompted her to open the casket, and she beheld rings, necklaces, and other precious gems worth twenty thousand rubles.

"Is this a present," asked she, looking fixedly at the Czar, "from the old or the new master? If from

the former, why, he sends away his old dogs with fine collars!"

Mute and motionless, she stood awhile, till tears sparkled in her eyes.

"Poor Menschikof!" she muttered. She made an effort to master herself. "There must be no wavering: if these be from my former lord, back they go to him!" Nevertheless, she singled out a small ring which had no great value, saying: "This is all I wish to accept from him; it is enough to remember his kindnesses by. I do not crave his riches."

Unable to contain herself, for she had hoped to become a princess through Menschikof's aid, she burst into tears and swooned. Peter called for help, and, bathing her forehead with Hungary water, brought her to consciousness. Then Peter told her that the jewels were a keepsake from Menschikof, and that she ought to keep them. He was only too pleased that a vassal of his had treated her so highly.

"Accept," concluded he, "and I will testify my thankfulness to him."

Though Peter had called in assistance, it was he alone who had revived her with noticeable care and attentions. This was the more remarkable, as such courteous refinement was not among the Bear's habits. Many augured that here was a deep affection, and they were not deceived.

As long as he dwelt in Livonia and thenceforward, Peter did not see Catherine and did not speak to a

soul about her; but when he had to return to Moscow, he charged a captain of his body-guards to conduct her thither, recommending that she should be given all deference, and that he should have a daily report about her health. At the capital, Catherine was installed under an old gentlewoman, in a quarter remote from the court. The Czar used to visit there, wearing a slouch beaver and ample cloak, for mystery is the concomitant of royal love. In this house were born the Princesses Anna and Elizabeth. She could dream of her future grandeur while the lord was founding St. Petersburg. But, while engineer and constructor at his new capital, and administrator and legislator at Moscow, he had to be a general of the first quality to defeat the invincible Charles XII.

After transforming a coarse and shapeless country into a powerful and victorious empire, Peter was to make of the Livonian Cinderella a Czarina, to bear the crown which she was to save. For the Czarina Eudoxie had been shut up the last five years in a convent. But it would require twelve years more before the usurper could be lawfully anointed and crowned. A strange occurrence came to remind the sinners of their true position. Among the prisoners made at Pultawa was the guards-soldier who had married Catherine, — the husband of a day — or two, to be precise. Transferred to Moscow with fourteen thousand other Swedes to grace Peter's progress, he entered the old Russian capital. Here he learnt what

was arranged between his wife and the Czar. Instead of being appalled, he felt hopeful, and entrusted the secret to the commissioner watching the prisoners. This man hastened to report the claim to his highest superior.

Peter wrote on the warning: "This man is a madman, to be treated like the other prisoners."

So he was sent, "like the other prisoners," into Siberia, that land of outer darkness, whence none come out to see the day. He died there, about 1721. It was not till sure of his death that Peter publicly acknowledged Catherine.

All at once, amid the feasts and triumphs, Peter learnt that two armies, one Turkish, the other Tartar, were marching upon Jassy. Numbering two hundred thousand, they were commanded by Mehemet the "Wood-chopper." He had been servant of all work in the harem, having his own way beside his Sultan; he had refused the commandership on account of this low origin, but the Grand Seignior had insisted, and gave him a jewelled scimitar as warrant.

Proud on account of Pultawa, Peter came out against the Wood-chopper with only thirty thousand soldiers, but they were the flower of the Muscovites, and Russia, through him, was the Star of the North, the germ of civilization. He had treated with the hospodars of Moldavia and Wallachia, but they failed him, and he stood on the Pruth banks, without sup-

plies, only a few pieces of artillery, and not three rounds to fire, at that.

"I am worse off than my brother Charles was at Pultawa," he said.

He commanded a grand forlorn hope on the morrow, and wrote to the home government that he expected to be defeated, and, if he were held captive, they were to pay no attention to orders purporting to be from his chained hand. During the night all the baggage was burnt. There would be no plunder for the victorious foe. The attack was to be made at dawn with the cold steel.

In the night Peter had an epileptic fit. All great warriors, from Cæsar to Napoleon, were subject to epilepsy. On opening his eyes, who but Catherine stood before him? His bosom counsellor, she had followed him over the Pruth. He might well be astonished to see her calm and firm, when he, the champion of culture, lay overthrown by sickness. She came to restore vanished strength and lost hope. It was no use battling — they should bribe!

With gold and jewels, any grand vizier can always be bought, she maintained. As she could not read or write, she had the despatches read to her from Count Tolstoi, their ambassador to Constantinople. He was a good judge of treachery, as he had betrayed the Princess Sophia to the Czar, and Catherine was sure that the Turkish favourites were in the market: the only thing was to fix the price.

Her voice had inspired the Czar to rise. He gave orders to a trusty intermediator.

"But if the Turk agrees," asked he, "where are we to get the cash? These rascals will not take pay in fine words!"

"Here!" replied the deliverer, "for I bring my diamonds with me, and, before our courier gets back, I shall scrape together every copper in the camp."

"*Deo adjuvante!* God speed thee!" said the monarch, using his personal motto.

Catherine mounted a horse and rode about the camp; she made this speech to soldiers and officers:

"Friends, we are in such jeopardy that we cannot save our liberty but on forfeit of our lives, or by making a bridge of gold for our foes to march over. If we take the former course, our money and gewgaws will be useless to us. Let us use them to seduce the enemy. I have already laid down my ornaments and gold — you ought, also, to furnish your quota!" She addressed each officer directly, saying: "What are you going to give me, sir? If we get out of this danger, I will repay you a hundredfold — to say nothing of what I shall urge our father the Czar to return."

From the general to the rank and file, every man gave what he had, so that there rose heaps of gold! Who shall say that this was not a Cinderella receiving her godmother's harvest?

The messenger had returned to say that the grand

vizier would welcome an agent to discuss peace. It is asserted that Catherine, not willing to let a second hand manage the treaty, went herself to the Turk. He said at first that the Czar must abjure and, then, "becoming our brother, we can refuse him nothing!"

Peter answered that he would give up all the land between there and Kertsch, as he might be able to regain it some day.

"But the loss of my faith is irrecoverable. How could the grand vizier believe in the pledge of a recreant who denied his God?"

The second demand was that the Czar and his forces should surrender under no promise.

"In another quarter of an hour," replied the negotiator, grand chancellor or Catherine, as the case may be, "my master will fall upon you, and we shall die to the last sooner than accept such shameful conditions."

At all events, that night the arrangement was signed. The Russ was to restore Azof, burn what shipping he had in the port, demolish forts, abandon all guns and munitions to the Grand Seignior, evacuate Poland, and renew the payment to the Tartars of a subsidy of forty thousand sequins, abolished by his previous victories. Fulfilling this, the Czar might retire with his men, guns, and colours flying. Over and above the bargain, the Turks offered to furnish food. Fortunately, the feebleness into which had fallen Sweden and her ruler, never recovering from

Pultawa, gave the Russian respite. Things quieting down at home with the extermination of the Strelitz, Peter might quit his realm and roam over Europe to crop the sheaf of arts and knowledge, of which he had culled something in his first tour. He took his good angel, the Czarina, with him through Holland and Germany. He wished her to enjoy France, but etiquette opposed it. His consort was not publicly recognized, which was a hollow jest from a kingdom where Mme. de Maintenon ruled.

But one day Peter learnt that the Livonian slave, torn from drudgery to be raised to the throne, the crowned Catherine, whom he had anointed with his own hands, had taken a favourite! He would not believe it at first, but he stooped to verify it in person. He burst upon the guilty pair and nearly killed the woman outright by a blow of his cane. The man cowered in the alcove curtains, but he went forth, without saying a word to him. Despite the scandal, he talked of having the Empress's head cut off in the market-place, but, dissuaded by the dread that a doubt would be cast on the authenticity of their daughters, he had the villain, Moens de Lacroix, tried on a vague charge of high treason. He was condemned and beheaded. His sister, held as an accomplice, was doomed to the knout, and, it is asserted, the Czar flogged her with his own hand. She was then sent into Siberia.

From a window in the Senate-house Peter saw the

execution; he went out upon the scaffold, where he took up the severed head and slapped its cheek. He returned to his palace, where he bade Catherine join him in the carriage for an airing. Though suspecting some awful sight, she dared not refuse. In the open coach he conducted her to the place where the bloody scaffold still stood, and where the trunkless head was adorning a pike, and led her, afoot, so that she swept up blood-drops with her robe. Catherine did not blench: her marble visage betrayed no emotion.

From that moment, all relations ceased between the couple, and only in public would Peter the Great see his consort. He burnt the will made in her favour — and he might well send her into the nunnery, like the first wife.

Peter could not bear the ingratitude of the household drudge whom he had made his declared wife, and in honour of whom he had created, and in memory of the cruel day at the Pruth, the Order of St. Catherine's knights. And she had betrayed him within four months of his parading her as Czarina and consecrating her — where a woman had never been so elevated before. He had called her "More than wife," as she was "not merely a woman by my side, but a counsellor at the throne-room board."

Catherine's thankfulness depended on hopes: as long as she was to gain, she was grateful. Still, the Czar's death might raise her one degree; high as was her throne, her mausoleum might be higher.

To her real crime history, or, at least, romance, added a fictitious one: she is accused, with Menschikof, of murdering Peter. It is a kind of justice that the woman, who escaped punishment for her actual misdeed, should carry into the grave the burden of a crime not hers. For the Colossus of the North died — years after he had worn out the scabbard of such a sword. Dying after tortures, he recognized that in him "man was but a miserable animal!" and, having paid his debts and released prisoners, he received the last offices, saying:

"I trust God will bestow one look of mercy on me for the good I have done my country!"

He died on the 28th of January, 1725, about four in the morning, which was his hour to rise and begin his never-finished tasks. Centuries have passed, but Russia still lives by his spirit. His memory is immortal, from the Baltic to the Caspian — and I defy you to set your foot where his has not trod in Russia.

When the sun goes down, the stars peep out again.

Menschikof had profited by his favour: it is not often that a favourite has been master of the favourite of his sovereign, and disposed of his rights to please the last. Perhaps Peter, who had seen how he oppressed the people at Marienburg, and saw still more clearly how he was prodigiously enriched by his later exactions, meant to exile him. He might have done worse than that, but for his death. Menschikof, therefore, remained unhurt, his fortune intact, with

all his honours, if not all his power. As field-marshal he had the troops under his thumb. He surrounded the Senate and marched with five hundred men within, where he proclaimed the succession to Catherine, hoping to reign in her name.

But his wardenship weighed upon her, and she showed her irritation on this point. At once he *foresaw* her early death, and set to choosing her successor. He promised the throne to the Grand Duke of Muscovy, on condition that he married his daughter. The heir-expectant promised, whether he meant to keep the pledge or not.

Indeed, as foreseen, Catherine fell ill. Menschikof *would* be her attendant, and she took all medicines from his hand. One day, the princely nurse took a potion from the lady in waiting. Catherine found the draught so bitter that she balked after two parts of it and handed the cup back. The lady could not understand how the drink of her own making could be so unpalatable, and finished the dregs, which were not to her taste now, either. The Empress died of it, while the lady was made sick, but saved by her husband, a chemist, administering an antidote.

Menschikof became master, and lord in all ways. He wedded his daughter to the youthful Czar, and took guard over him, as though he were a prisoner who might run away. And, for that matter, the young prince did run, and at the flight the guardian *foresaw* that he himself was lost. He was arrested, and finally

banished to Siberia, after being stripped of his many insignia. His wife died on the road to exile, and he in the icy captivity.

Catherine had outlived her duped husband but two years, and Menschikof, who deceived both, but by four. When his eldest daughter died in his arms, he said to the other children:

"Learn, by this martyr's death, to die without any regret for the things of this world." But his other daughter, recalled, was made princess again, and became Duchess of Biren.

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CHAPTER VI.

THE LEGEND OF LESTOCQ

(1692 - 1767)

HERMANN LESTOCQ is the hero of a comic opera by Scribe, which had a great success; the author treated his hero with his customary historical severity, but sufficient of the romantic tragedy in his career was omitted to require this remembrance.

Lestocq was a barber-surgeon's son. · From time out of mind barbers have been bloodletters, and the pursuit leads to the apprentice becoming surgeon, or doctor, solely, though the barber, as court annals evince, is the sole man in the kingdom who can with impunity " take the sovereign by the nose."

Lestocq went as a surgeon to St. Petersburg, where he entered the household of the imperial princess, Elizabeth. She and her sister Anna were daughters of Peter the Great. Anna married a Prince of Holstein, and their son became Peter III.

Her aunt, Anna Ivanowna, was daughter of the idiot Ivan, who reigned conjointly with the Czar Peter. In virtue of a right arrogated by Russian monarchs to appoint their successors, Anna displaced

Elizabeth from the line by setting on the throne her nephew, little Ivan Antonowitch, grandson of her sister, wedded to a Duke of Mecklenburg.

The cause of this substitution was that Elizabeth, being thirty years old, would reign in her own right, while little Ivan, only a few months old, must have a regent. Biren was appointed regent. The petty Emperor reigned seven months, and paid for the ephemeral dignity by twenty-two years' incarceration and a sanguinary death.

Biren was son of a groom to Duke James III. of Courland. Chosen captain of the royal hunt after service in the wars, he was made Duke of Courland when the duchess of that realm was made Empress of Russia. He was deeply hated by the Russians as a foreigner, to begin with, and as the sovereign's favourite, besides. He hated them in return, and would not learn their language, so that he might ignore the petitions the subjects addressed to his imperial lady. As long as she lived, he was protected by the Russians' love for her, against their hate for him.

He believed himself popular, and was very haughty. One day he went so far as to say to the Czar's mother:

"Mark well, madame, that I can pack you and your husband back into Germany, where there dwells a Duke of Holstein who will fill your place very well. I shall do that, too, if driven to it!"

This substitute was Peter of Holstein, son of Peter the Great's first daughter, Anna, and one yet to be

Peter III. He was called to Russia, not by Biren, but by Elizabeth, to gratify another vengeance. This threat from the regent chilled communication between him and the imperial family.

Toward the end of October, 1740, they took their revenge. General Munich overturned the regent, who was sent into Siberia with his wife. Munich was rewarded with the premiership by the Duchess Anna. She did not neglect the generally useless formality, having all the family pledge fealty to her regency.

Among the takers of the oath was the Princess Elizabeth, who might believe in as much right to the crown as Ivan's daughter and Peter's great-grandson, since she was the great Czar's own daughter. She made no difficulty about taking the oath; she understood that the majority of the troops who had supported old General Munich in arresting Lord Biren had done so in the belief that it was at her command and to her profit.

But nobody paid any heed to the good, merry Princess Elizabeth: she was a fair and good-natured woman, who wished to live "free and easy," as they say, and so would not marry. Her motto was that no woman is happy save when in love. She was fond of luxury, the table, and — it is a delicate point, but as there was an English queen known as "Brandy Nan," Elizabeth's partiality for cognac may pass at that coarse period. The new regent was sure that, if she did not let her jovial relative want for money.

COUNT MUNICH.

she need fear nothing from her. Indeed, the carousing princess led her merry round and paid no attention to politics.

Rondeau, the French ambassador to Russia, says of the black sheep: "She is not in good health, or feigns to be so; some say it is spite from her being set aside in favour of the Czarina Anna; others, merely to avoid being present at the coronation. I cannot affirm the reason; but it is certain that she leads a highly irregular life, and that the Czarina is not grieved at her losing public esteem."

It was planned that she should be inveigled by Biren's brother, but the princess, however flighty, constantly held out against his siege. More or less on account of her quaffing of spirits, the future Elizabeth "the Clement," — because no executions took place in her reign, though her predecessor Anna had destroyed eleven thousand, some with refined torture, it was noted, — this Czarina *in futuro* had to keep her private physician busy.

It was the Doctor Lestocq already cited.

It is much to be a medical adviser to an imperial princess, but more to be that to a Czarina; Lestocq aimed to make his patient an Empress. It was not so hard a task. She represented the old Russian party, while the regent and her consort lived out of tune. Munich, the sword of the realm, had been ousted; Ostermann, who would have been the eye, was laid up with the gout, and managed matters from the easy

chair. Besides, the regent, so jealous about her authority as not to allow her mate a particle, might not be sorry to dispense with her premier.

The English minister, Finch, expresses the sentiments of the Conservative party, absolutely the same to this day, in his despatches:

"The nobles who own property are mostly favourable to the present state. They keep in the swim. The greater number are inveterate Russian, and nothing but force and violence prevents them returning to their primitive manners. Not one among them but wishes St. Petersburg buried at the bottom of the sea, and all the conquered territory given over to the Old Harry, so they could dwell at Moscow, near their lands, and make a show at less expense. They do not wish to meddle with Europe. They hate foreigners, whom they only value to employ them at warfare and dismiss them when served. They similarly abominate sea voyages, and prefer to be sent into the most horrible wastes of Siberia than serve in the navy." Such is worthy Mr. Finch's political opinion.

Would you like to hear his moral judgment? It is clear and concise:

"I do not know a single person here who would, in any other country, pass for a tolerably honest man." Our excellent Puritan set his signature to this.

This is the society where Doctor Lestocq was to operate.

Commonly, princesses of the Elizabethan type are popular; feminine weakness is readily excused in the high-born. She made friends among the military officers, and was smiling and open-handed to the rank and file. Lestocq fanned this martial popularity.

He also had frequent confabulations with the French minister, Chetardie. These intrigues were denounced to his government by our Diogenes-like Finch, whose diplomatic lantern had not shown him one honest man. Mr. Finch imparted his fears to the Prince of Brunswick, who went a little further, and found that the French ambassador often called in disguise and at unwonted hours upon the princess. If her conduct grew more alarming, he promised to have her shut up in a nunnery.

"Hem! a dangerous expedient!" comments Mr. Finch, decidedly a *chaff*-finch, "for the lady has no inclination to religious life, and she is loved by the people."

On hearing of this threat, Lestocq judged that he must strike quickly.

He was a sort of all-round man. Not only was he a doctor and a politician, but an artist; at least, he could draw, in his leisure. He made a cartoon which he showed to Princess Elizabeth. It was a diptych; in one part, it pictured the lady on her Russian throne, with the Czar's crown on her head, and he on the throne steps, wearing the ribbon of the St. Andrew's order; the other showed the lady, with her poll shaven,

and he broken on the wheel. Beneath was written: "To-day, thus — to-morrow, the other!"

You will remark that politicians — or, at least, politic men of that period — were blunt and terse.

On her part, the lady was quick and sharp. She fixed the very next night for carrying out the great plot: November 24, 1741.

At midnight she prayed, and donned the ribbon of the St. Catherine Order, founded by Peter I., in memory of his army being miraculously delivered from the Turks.

Lestocq and Michael Woronzoff mounted behind her carriage. They went to the barracks of the Preobrajenski Guards, the first regiment founded by Czar Peter. Those in the design had coaxed over some three hundred grenadiers.

"Friends," said the woman, "you know whose daughter I am? Follow me!"

"We are ready — and we will kill the whole of them!"

As this was more than she desired, she cautioned them to kill nobody without orders, and directed them to the Winter Palace. She was followed by the three companies, muskets loaded, but the bayonets fixed. In the first guard-house they came to, a drummer set to beating the alarm, but a clever slit with a knife silenced his drum. Who gave this timely cut, — Elizabeth or Lestocq? Both claim the honour; but we are inclined to believe that it was Lestocq, more

likely to be clever with the steel, as a surgeon, than the Empress, who would not be carrying so much as a penknife or a pair of scissors. The drum disabled, the guard-house was surprised, and the soldiers joined their comrades so that all entered the Winter Palace without resistance.

At the boy Emperor's door, a sentinel lowered his bayonet on the rebels.

"What are you about, donkey?" cried Lestocq; "ask your pardon of the Empress!"

The soldier fell on his knees. The Duke and Duchess of Brunswick were put under arrest while abed. So they had served the Duke of Biren and his lady. As for little Ivan, awakened suddenly and seeing the soldiers around him, he began to weep. His nurse ran to him, took him in her arms, and sought to quiet him; but she could not succeed; his woes were to last twenty years! The prizes were taken to Elizabeth's mansion. That same night, all who had concerted in Biren's downfall and setting up young Ivan, — Munich, Ostermann and their allies — were arrested.

Three days after, Czarina Elizabeth declared that the Princess Anna, her consort and their son had no claim on the Russian crown, and would be sent home into Germany. In the interval, they would be shut up in Riga fort; but they passed on, and the child arrived parentless at Schlusselburg. His mother died on the journey, and the Duke of Brunswick was

released as being of no alarming capacity. When you bid your Ophelia get into the nunnery, it is well to see that she is put there.

Lestocq was created count and private counsellor to the Empress, while remaining her private medical attendant, and given a pension of seven thousand rubles and a diamond-framed portrait of the lady he had exalted to the imperial purple.

Chetardie was made director of politics, and acted solely for France.

The three hundred grenadiers who were "loyal" were promoted into a company by themselves, as body-guards, all the privates ranking as lieutenants, and the sub-officers as captains and majors. The six superior officers who had subverted the rest were made lieutenant-colonels. The Empress appointed herself colonel, and wore the special uniform sometimes.

The old Russ party clamoured for the expulsion of foreigners. Art, science, and letters were banished, together with the opposition, Munich, Ostermann, and their friends condemned to death, but merely exiled.

Whereupon, having no one to hold her hand, the "bachelor-princess" turned a moral vault, and married. She wedded her favourite, Razumowski, a man of her own age, and chapel-master. The celebration was public, at Moscow, but the bridegroom was modest, and never meddled with politics, which Bestuchef and Schuvalof controlled. A long while after,

when Gregory Orloff pestered Catherine to follow Elizabeth's example as to marrying her "Leicester," a lawyer was charged to question Razumowski upon the formula, so that it might be followed. But old Razumowski reflected on the request. He went to his writing-cabinet, took out a packet of papers, and, without saying a word, threw the bundle into the open fire; he watched till all were reduced to ashes, and when the black pile had the scintillating sparks die and fall on the mass, he returned to Orloff's envoy and said:

"I do not know what you mean by asking me for papers regarding *my* marriage with the Empress Elizabeth. I have never had the honour to be the husband of the Czarina."

Catherine comprehended this piece of indirect advice, and remained a widow.

To finish: Lestocq made the mistake of promoting to power over his head this Bestuchef, one of the men who put into practice, whenever they can, the grand precept of one of our modern philosophers: "Ingratitude is independence of the heart."

He naturally worked from the start to upset his benefactor. Lestocq's first loss was in Chetardie being called home from St. Petersburg, leaving with a million rubles given him by Empress Elizabeth.

Ten months after he had "made" the Czarina, Lestocq was tried for high treason, in secrecy; tortured three times and flung, with a broken frame, into exile

at Uglitsch, a petty village on the Volga, but soon, as that was too near the capital, sent to Archangel.

The Empress, knowing that all revolutions occur in the dark at St. Petersburg, could no longer sleep, and, unfortunately, she had deprived herself of the private physician. She had to find a man, a soldier, so homely that no one could accuse her of any amorous weakness in selecting him for watchman in her anteroom.

She died at the height of the corruption she fostered by her luxury and lassitude. Swaart, the Dutch minister to Russia in her reign, says: "Never was there, even in this country, a more dangerous, disordered, and deplorable state of things. The Empress troubles about nothing at all, and continues her old style of living; she abandons the realm to pillage." This disorder did not terminate by her death in 1762.

CZARINA ANNA.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ROMANCE OF THE BOY CZAR

(1740-1750)

On the silvery waters of Lake Ladoga, from a little village of which I have forgotten the name, rises the low and lugubrious profile of the fortalice of Schlusselburg. Its first name was a humble one and forgotten; its present one signifies the Town Key; and, indeed, it is a great stone lock, of which the wards are the cannon. A proverb says that "walls have ears." If these walls, besides ears, were gifted with a tongue, what gruesome stories it would prattle! We put ours at the service of the stronghold, and will tell one tale for it.

Here was nurtured, confined, and assassinated "the Little Ivan."

I do not know of a more mournful legend than this royal infant's, even that of Drusus's, dying of starvation, after champing his mattress straw; or even Clodomir's, slain by Clotaire, or yet little Arthur of Brittany's, whose eyes were put out by orders of his Uncle John.

The sister of the short-reigning Czarina, Anna, had

married a Duke of Mecklenburg, and their child grew up to become duchess of the same place. This one married Duke Antony Ulrich of Brunswick, hence the son called Ivan Antonowitch — meaning Antony's son.

To this grand-nephew the Empress left her throne, in dying, rather than to Peter's own daughter, Elizabeth Petrowna, born of Catherine I. in 1709, whom she treated as an outcast.

In the night of the 17th October, 1740, the Empress died.

The next day was formally read her will, which named the little Ivan her successor as Emperor, and appointed Biren, Duke of Courland, regent until the boy reached his seventeenth year. This regency, planned to last long, endured twenty days. By a "palace revolution," young Ivan's mother, Anna, despoiled Biren of his honours overnight, and pushed him off his stool into exile. She was proclaimed as grand duchess and regent, her husband generalissimo, Count Munich her premier, and Ostermann lord high admiral and foreign minister.

The act had disappointed several persons. First was the Princess Elizabeth, Peter the Great's second daughter, who had always hugged the prospect of being next Empress to Anna Ivanowna. This would have happened but for the latter's tenderness toward her favourite; she had expected, in appointing Biren regent, to confirm his powers for the minority. By

preferring Elizabeth, she would cause the immediate expatriation of the Duke of Courland to his principality, if no farther. The Duke of Brunswick and his wife were also baffled.

By arresting Biren, Marshal Munich had won the rank of commander-in-chief, but he resigned it that the army might have the honour of being commanded by the sovereign's father. Yet he had added to his letter of resignation: "Although my great services to the state might well merit that honour!" Still, in transferring the post to the duke, the warrior gave only an illusory meed — he was the real general. This Christopher Burchard was the favourite pupil of Prince Eugene, and had gone through the War of the Spanish Succession. Stern and hard, he had passed into Peter the Great's service, for whom he built the Lake Ladoga Canal. Anna Ivanowna made him field-marshal and privy counsellor. As Count of Munich, he fought and beat the Turks and the Polacks. Biren, fearing his influence, kept him out of the capital by affording him plenty of occupation in the border strife. One of these campaigns cost Russia a hundred thousand men, so disastrous was it, but Munich grew greater, if possible. Always in the lead, he made the most difficult marches, and maintained discipline by dread justice.

Some general officers lengthened out a halt longer than the indefatigable German allowed. They were bound to cannon and dragged along when they could

not walk. Soldiers, in fear of the wide sandy tracts, pretended to be ill. He published an order that any one too sick to march should be buried alive. Three soldiers, sentenced for "malingering," or pretending illness to avoid duty, were actually buried alive in front of the army, which had to march over them, so that they were obliterated, trampled upon, perhaps, while still breathing. From that moment never was there a healthier army.

At the siege of Otchakof a bombshell lighted such a fire in the town that the people could not master it. Munich profited by the conflagration to order an assault. But the flames ran out to the ramparts, and the foes would have to contend with that element as well as the defenders. The Russes recoiled. Munich trained and aimed a battery of guns at them, so that their only refuge was within the fiery walls. Three powder-magazines blew up, covering both forces with burning embers, but, between two modes of death, the Russians chose that less certain. The city was taken. Any other man but Munich would have been repulsed.

This was a terrible antagonist, more so than Biren, but, as he had upset the latter, so the Princess Elizabeth, taking a page from his book, upset him, too, but in this way. She had the other grand duchess banished, and set down Munich for a trip to Siberia, displacing him by the Doctor Lestocq, as we have elsewhere narrated. On the new Czarina's last birthday as princess, little Ivan had made her a present of a

gold snuff-box — it is honorary, and does not imply that the brandy-drinker was also a snuff-taker. Let us see what return she made the boy, when in the highest seat. She had the first impulse to send him along with the Duke and Duchess of Brunswick over the frontier; but, revoking the first intention, as diplomacy counsels, she had the three prisoners shut up at Riga, in the castle. Later, they were taken away to Archangel; the lady dying in 1749, and her husband twenty years later.

As for little Ivan, culpable of reigning nominally seven months, and at an age when he did not know what a throne was, he was parted from his parents and lodged in a convent on the Moscow Road.

In his "History of My Times," by Elizabeth's physician, — one Frederick, not Lestocq, — it is alleged that a philtre was given to Ivan, through which his brain was addled. I do not believe this. The local tradition, as I heard it, is that he was a bright and pretty boy, and likely to turn out a handsome young man. If he had been a weakling and an idiot, Elizabeth would not have balanced the idea an instant between him and the Duke of Brunswick, with whose hand Biren had threatened her celibacy; and Peter III. would not have had the idea to make him his successor by repudiating Catherine and denying Paul I.; and, if an idiot, he would have died a natural death in prison, as he lived.

In 1757, as he came to be seventeen, the United

States of the Netherlands had a minister at St. Petersburg, Swaarts, interested enough in the goings on to write to Mr. Mitchell, the British minister at Berlin:

"At the beginning of last winter, Ivan was brought out of Schlusselburg to St. Petersburg, where he was lodged in a pleasant house, belonging to the widow of a late secretary of the Secret Inquisition. Here he is closely watched. The Empress had him brought to the Winter Palace, where she saw that he donned men's clothes. It is doubtful which of the three will mount the throne, he, the grand duke, or grand duchess."

But Elizabeth fell back on her nephew of Holstein, and died recommending him, in 1762. As the kind lady would not allow any capital punishment in her reign, the boy Czar might lie in prison, but he ran no risk of death. After his interview with the sovereign, Ivan was returned to Schlusselburg. Peter III. saw him there, and once again he was brought to St. Petersburg. Nothing is known of the effect of this double imperial view, but no doubt the apprehension the boy heir inspired to Catherine II. hastened her reversal of the will and the death of Peter III.

Once on the throne, Catherine II. gave strict orders concerning the youth. In the middle of the fort yard was built a wooden house; the whole was encircled by a gallery, paced by sentinels day and night. His bed was set in the centre of a room, as the house was in the fort court. Then, from the ceiling, was lowered

an iron cage, which entirely engirdled him; at the same time, a loophole was unshuttered in the wall, and disclosed a great gun, loaded with case-shot and levelled on him.

Enclosed as he was, and because he was so closely enclosed, the young prince preoccupied all minds. Never was there trouble in the capital but that his name was uttered and reëchoed as a threat to Catherine II.

Ambassadors spoke of him to their monarchs.

In August, 1751, Lord Buckingham, the British ambassador, wrote home: "Opinions differ about young Ivan: some say he is utterly an idiot, others that he is only lacking education."

About ten years later, there was a Cossack named Mirowitch who conceived the idea of kidnapping the heir by some such bold stroke as Lestocq and Munich had practised. He was grandson of a man ruined by following the flag of Mazeppa. Worried by his poverty, his spirit was restless. He forgot that, every time a favourite raises a woman or a man to empire, the favourite is dismissed. Being on guard at Schlusselburg, he determined that he would remove the young Czar out of bondage.

There is another version. It does not lack probability, and harmonizes with the genius of Russian policy so demoralizing, for as Mr. Finch, again quoted, says: "This country has not a passably honest man in it!" Catherine opened her confidence to her

favourite, Orloff, and not Potemkine, as some assert. The captive gave her anxiety, although the orders were to kill him if he attempted to escape. The confidant made sure that the deadly order was standing, and based his move upon that. Investigation revealed Mirowitch's own ambitious plans. The young Cossack was brought to Orloff, who imparted the Empress's uneasiness, and promised him mountains of gold if he would dissipate them. But how? The way was simple. As the orders were for Ivan to be fired upon if he tried to escape, Mirowitch had only to make the attempt and Ivan would be shot down. He would not only be pardoned for the mock kidnapping, but his fortune ensured for the feigned plot. The hearer, from the confidant making the proposition, did not doubt that it originated from the Empress. He accepted, and received as earnest-money a thousand silver rubles. With it he bribed twenty soldiers. He would lead them upon the governor and summon him to surrender the boy Czar.

Here the two versions merge.

The castle commandant refused. By Mirowitch's order, the hirelings sprang upon him and pinioned him. The chief being powerless to oppose the revolt, Mirowitch ordered the powder-magazine keeper to supply his followers with ammunition. Fully equipped, the Cossack marched to the prisoner's quarters.

But all these movements were not accomplished without some stir. A captain and a lieutenant at the

prince's apartments heard the noise. So they refused when Mirowitch knocked at the door, announcing that he was master of the fort, and asking for *the Emperor* to be transferred to his hands. On a second refusal, the commander of the rescuers had the door beaten down by musket-butts. But the officers informed the rebels that they had orders to kill their prisoner in case of a plot to deliver him. If they did not retire, they would be compelled to act on the instructions, but Mirowitch pressed onward all the more.

In spite of the shower of blows rained upon the barrier, they heard a most piercing shriek.

"They are murdering the Emperor!" shouted the Cossack, smiting with an axe so that the split panels gave way.

But they penetrated too late: the guardians had carried out their order. Inside the enmeshing cage Ivan seemed to sleep. It was through the bars that the captain had darted his sword. That was what occasioned the death-scream overheard without. But the stricken one rose against his assailants; he grasped the sword and wrested it from the bloody hand; he opposed all the defence he could, fencing through the grating. After so many days languishing, the poor captive might well think that Providence owed him some compensation. He would not lay down his life. With seven slashes he still lived, and only the eighth slew him.

That was the crisis when Mirowitch burst into the

room. The prince was breathing his last. The slayers made the cage ascend and unmask the ensanguined bed.

"There's his dead body — make the most of it!" they taunted.

Mirowitch took the dead body in his arms, and carried it to the guard-house, where he wrapped it in the flag. Then making his followers kneel, he prostrated himself to the Emperor and kissed his hand. He took off his gorget, his sash, and his sabre, and laid them beside the corpse, saying:

"Behold our lawful lord, our Emperor! I did all I could to restore him to you; now, being dead, I have no reason to live, as I risked my life for him."

Arrested, he was taken to St. Petersburg and shut up in a cell. During the trial next day he showed much calm and steadiness. Those who pretended that he was Catherine's secret agent saw in this bearing the belief that she would carry out the promise of her favourite. To the question, "Who were your confederates?" he always answered negatively, saying that the soldiers and non-commissioned officers who aided him could not be considered accomplices, as they were only subordinates who obeyed him.

But he was condemned to be broken on the wheel. The Empress commuted the penalty to decapitation. The execution took place within the citadel. The headsman, judges, and soldiers guarding were the sole witnesses. Therefore, it is not known what he may

have said at the last hour. No doubt there was too much danger in repeating any such words.

I possess a ruble-piece of young Ivan, struck during his seven months' reign; it is the more rare, as Empress Elizabeth, wishful to wipe out all record of that reign, ordered a general recoining of all currency. It is, perhaps, the only token in all the world of an Emperor in bib and tucker.

As the wise physician allows a spoonful of jam after a bitter pill, so I may offer a merry tale about the gloomy fortress, after the Czaricide.

The Russian police do not play with the artists who make sketches of strong places, and a friend of mine found that out to his cost.

He was brother to my good friend, Noel Parfait, and was a professor.

It was an awkward period; namely, the Crimean War time. Nevertheless, being in occupation at St. Petersburg, he planned with two brother savants to pass a week's holiday in exploring Lake Ladoga. Being March, the Neva, the Baltic, and the lake were all ice-bound. The principal occupation was, consequently, much skating. This means of locomotion would grant the three learned men great facilities of examining the fort from all sides, as it is surrounded by water, being located at the springing of the Neva from the lake. To the great uneasiness of the sentinels on the walls, the trio skimmed all around their posts, darting about on their skates like swallows.

This might not so much have mattered, but our Frenchman — the French have the reputation abroad of being mad — had not the sense to confine himself to the gambols and figure-cutting appropriate to the ornamental waters of the Paris parks. He must needs sit on a rock and, pulling out a note-book, draw the citadel!

The sentinel who spied him recovered breath from the shock and called the corporal; he notified his officer, and, with eight men, the latter went out and walked in upon the three Frenchmen in their inn, where they were warming up before a good fire and a better dinner. He signified to them that they had the honour to be prisoners to his Imperial Majesty the Emperor of All the Russias. In this capacity they were allowed to finish their meal, but they were searched and all their papers taken from them; they were tied to one another, for fear of a loss, put into a cart, and driven to St. Petersburg.

There they were put in the fortress. They claimed the help of Count Alexis Orloff, the imperial favourite. Luckily, Orloff was a very intelligent man. He had lived so long in the intimacy of spies, conspirators, and secret agents that he did not believe them. Going to the prison, he questioned the captives one by one, with severity, but courtesy, too, and told them that, though they were heinously guilty, he hoped that the Czar's clemency would commute their grave penalty of a residence in Siberia.

The poor scholars were prostrated. One of the crimes held up to them, besides their sketching Schlusselburg, was their drinking the health of their foreign country, France, in *kwass*. It appears that, to use the national beverage, much added to the enormity of the original offence.

At ten next evening, one of those penal vehicles, half-box, half-stage, arrived at the prison. The offenders were notified that their sentence had been passed, and that they would have to bow to it. Contrite, but calling their native pride to their support, the trio put the best face on the matter. Bravely stepping out, they shook hands with each other, congratulating themselves that at the worst they were to suffer in company, and mounted into the tumbrel. Its shutters were hermetically sealed over the windows, and off the vehicle lumbered, drawn by four horses.

But to the exiled ones' highest astonishment, it rolled under another vaulted way after only ten minutes' journey. The doors were opened, but footmen in rich livery presented themselves instead of the scowling Cossacks expected. They guided them to the foot of a splendidly illumined staircase, and indicated that up that golden course was their destination.

They did not dare hesitate. They climbed the stairs and were ushered into a refection-room, served with all the lavishness of the old Russ nobility. Count Alexis Orloff was waiting here.

"Gentlemen," he said, "your worst misdeed was

drinking to France in Russian beer. You shall expiate that on the spot by drinking the health of Russia in champagne!"

If they had not been patriotic, they would still have obeyed willingly.

It will be seen that — if not all Russians — the Orloffs have a very good notion of a practical joke. Stop! I am wrong: I can guarantee that the Romanoffs are also prone to a hoax.

As Peter found St. Petersburg mud and made it — wood — it is logical that smoking should be prohibited in the streets. A cigar butt incautiously thrown down might repeat "the Burning of Moscow."

As it is a ruble fine to be caught with a cigar alight, the Emperor Nicholas was much surprised to see from his sledge a man puffing away boldly at a pure Havana. But he saw that it was a foreigner — a Frenchman at that. He alighted, went up to him, and, reciting the mandate, assured him that, if he would allow him to give him "a lift," he would take him to the only place in town where smoking was allowed. He did conduct him to the Winter Palace, where he furthermore led him into the grand dukes' smoking-divan, where he begged him to make himself at home.

"Fire away, sir!" he said, cordially, "for this is the only spot in the city where smoking is not prohibited."

The Frenchman, having finished his smoke in peace and amid luxury, naturally inquired of the porter if

he could acquaint him with the name of the obliging gentleman who had brought him into such a smokers' paradise.

"It is the Emperor," he was answered.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ROMANCE OF CATHERINE THE GREAT

(1762 - 1796)

ALTHOUGH the Empress Elizabeth was fonder of pleasure than of statecraft, she had the sense, as ruler, to know that a proof of the stability of kingdoms is to have an heir presumptive on the steps of the throne where the sovereign is seated.

She summoned her nephew to the capital, where she recognized him as her successor; it was Peter, Duke of Holstein-Gottorf, born in 1728. He reached St. Petersburg in February, 1742, being fourteen years old. In spite of being a boy, his aunt hastened to find him a wife. Her choice fell upon Princess Sophia of Anhalt-Zerbst, whose father, Governor of Stettin, was not eager to give his darling to the heir of a throne unsure of being duly inherited. We have to say " Sophia," as the lady, Voltaire's " Semiramis of the North," took the name of Catherine, under which she achieved celebrity, only on embracing the Greek Church faith.

She was born at Stettin, May, 1729, so that she was her husband's junior by a little over a year.

CZARINA CATHERINE II.

The marriage was performed in September, 1745. The bridegroom was feeble in mind and body; his education had been neglected under mere hirelings; his brow was permanently bald, his eye lack-lustre, and his lower lip a hanging one.

On the other hand, the bride of sixteen had exuberant beauty, bewitching wit, regal manners, and a complexion fresh as the rose or the peach.

Together with this, a character firm, bold, resolute, adventurous, persevering, but tempered with perfect graciousness and complaisance, not simply one to take an ascendancy over men, but to preserve it.

It was not till 1755 that the pair was given a son and heir, baptized as Paul Petrowitch — or Paul, son of Peter. But the child was inconceivably ugly — we need not mince words — for the offspring of so brilliant a beauty. The mother showed hatred for it from the first step. He grew up to be unworthy of the exalted position which his mother's reign prepared him. As a descendant of Peter the Great and King Charles XII. of Sweden, he was trained to be a great man. But his aspirations, being ill-sustained, were evinced in base and lowly acts and actions. His examples, followed, were the failings and puerilities of great heroes. With naturally a comical figure, he wore the great Frederick's military costume so as to be more ridiculous than ever. His little pinched-up face was like an ape's, and he grimaced like one.

Catherine held a court apart from her husband's,

and engineered everything toward having her son substituted for the husband whom she despised and derided; if the deed were soon done, she might long be regent. But two things were the pivots here: the Empress should die, or her nephew be unseated.

Elizabeth, though a free liver, might last long, and it was not easy to depose the grand duke.

Meanwhile, Catherine was at odds with her mate; she became profoundly isolated. Her favourite waiting-maid was taken from her and sent into imprisonment. She might, for the time, believe that her prospect was blank, and, doubting her genius and despairing about her destiny, she begged the Empress's permission to go home to her mother's. The Czarina eluded the question.

Whereupon, Catherine came to her own conclusion, and, pondering over it, allowed her days to pass in impenetrable obscurity for the three years of Elizabeth's declining life. Elizabeth, on her death-bed, according to Lord Keith, the British ambassador, "bade the grand duke and the grand duchess farewell with deep affection." The French representative, the Duke of Breteuil, writes: "The Empress called in the grand duke and the grand duchess to recommend the former to be good to the subjects and win their love; she enjoined him to live in union with his wife, discoursed at length on her affection for the young Duke Paul, assuring the father that his surest and emphatic token of gratitude to her would be in cherishing his

boy." (It may be repeated here that a legend asserted that Paul was one of her children, palmed off by acquiescence of all parties as the Czarowitch's own. This has little probability and less credit — even at court.)

The heir promised everything. When he mounted the throne, as Peter III., he was in his thirty-third year. Long bridled-in by severe tutors, he gave way to extravagance with a merry heart, but inaugurated his ascension by a famous *ukase* about freedom, which the Russian nobility of Alexander's time accorded to the people. The enthusiasm was so great that the peerage proposed to commemorate it by his statue in pure gold, which I do not remember as having been offered to any sovereign. Nothing came of the suggestion. At the same time — which, perhaps, better deserved a statue, even of pure gold — Peter recalled the exiles out of Siberia.

Among the "ghosts" were Biren and Munich. Biren was now seventy-five; his hair was blanched, but his face was still hard and stern. In his nine years' power, he had dealt out violent death to eleven thousand creatures, and some of the tortures he applied, like those of Nero and Phalaris, were of his own device. For three years of sovereign rule he had passed twenty in exile, but yet here he was, in the town where his throne had been the scaffold, and where every man he met had the right to upbraid him for the loss of a sire or son!

Count Munich was the veteran soldier, whom Biren had upset for putting young Ivan on the throne while a child. He was a fine old fellow of over eighty, with his beard and locks unclipped. At the gate of the capital he was met by thirty or so of his descendants, which sight drew tears to eyes never before knowing them in any tragedy or desolation.

The weakling Emperor had the crazy idea of bringing together this Chimborazo and Himalaya, separated by an ocean of crimes and revolutions. The pigmy had three goblets brought him and them, and wished all three to quaff a toast. At that, an usher came to whisper to the monarch, who left the pair together. They stared with hate, and they smiled with scorn, and each, setting down the untouched beaker on a board, walked out by opposite doors, never more to meet till before the Tribunal on high.

This was not the sole freak of the insane sovereign. Every morning there was tittle-tattle concerning him. It was averred that he planned to repudiate Catherine, and set up a favourite in her stead. She was bound to stir in her own defence.

For three years, in the background, she had made any early indiscretions be forgot. She affected piety, most touching to the masses, whose religion is totally superficial. She gave her hand to the captains with whom she chatted, and she enchanted the soldiers by speaking and smiling to them on guard. One night, in crossing a dark courtyard, a sentinel presented arms.

"How could you tell me in the dark?" she inquired.

"'Mother,' how should I not have recognized you?" replied the man. "Do you not illumine the ground where you pass?" The Oriental trumpeting delighted her.

Maltreated by the Czar when before him, publicly disgraced, repudiated in fact, if not formally, she told every hearer that the Emperor led her to fear bodily violence. In public her smile was of sad resignation; with the tears she apparently could not restrain, she tempered her weapons for the future freedom. Her secret partisans, and they were legion, gave out that they were astonished to see her alive, day after day; they prated of attempts to poison her which had failed because she had some faithful servitors, but they dreaded that renewed attempts would not be ineffectual.

These rumours acquired consistency when Paul had the young Ivan brought out of twenty years' captivity, ten of which were of idiocy, and honoured with a private hearing in his confinement. It was a significant step. Adopted by Empress Anna, rudely and arbitrarily pushed off the throne by Empress Elizabeth, Ivan was still the natural heir to Peter — supposing that Peter had no more authentic heir.

It was easy, therefore, as the mariner tells by atmospheric signs of the coming tempest — to perceive by the earth's trembling that a convulsion was coming, when a throne, or, at least, its occupant, would be shaken off into a gulf. Conversations became queru-

lous murmurs, timid questions, and broken phrases; feeling that the situation was not tenable, every one sought to learn how his neighbours stood before committing himself. The chagrined Empress became serious; but soon her countenance gradually assumed the calmness under which great minds conceal vast designs. The masses quivered from shocks artfully disseminated; soldiers were waked untimely by unseen drummers who seemed ordered to keep them on the alert; mysterious voices shouted: "To arms!" in the night; then, in the barracks, parade-ground, and even the palace yards, guardsmen ran up together, asking:

"What has happened to the 'Mother'?"

But all would shake the head and mournfully say:

"We can do nothing, for there is no leader!"

They were wrong; there was a leader — there were two, in truth.

In the army was a gentleman, wholly unknown. He possessed a few serfs; and, with brothers in the guards, in the ranks, he was aid to the grand master of the artillery. He was not only a handsome but a gigantic man, of such prodigious strength that he could roll up a silver platter like a sheet of paper, and could shiver a drinking-glass by opening his two fingers thrust within. He had been seen to stop a three-horse carriage in full course by grasping the hind axle.

His name was Gregory Orloff. He was descended from the young Strelitz guardsman spared by Peter I. on that sanguinary day when the Russian Mame-

lukes were slain by the thousand, and four thousand corpses dangled on trees. His four brothers in the Imperial Guards were Ivan, Alexis, Feodor, and Vladimir.

The general, whose aid-de-camp Gregory was, had dangled at the apron-strings of the reigning beauty, Princess Kurakine; but his attaché courted her also. The younger man was about to be punished for his impudent rivalry by despatch into Siberia, when an invisible hand stayed the judgment; it was a duchess's, for Catherine was not yet Empress. The general dying, — such deaths occur timely at court, — Orloff was made Treasurer of the Artillery Department, which place gave him a captaincy by rank, so that he could make friends for himself — and his benefactress. There were two " friends " whom it was incumbent to secure. First, the Colonel of the Ismailof Regiment, of which Orloff, handling a cash-box, had bought two companies and captains, body and boots. The other was the young grand duke's tutor.

The colonel was Count Cyrille Razumovski, brother of the chapel-chorister who wedded the Empress Elizabeth. Orloff negotiated with him direct to the effect that he promised to be at Catherine's orders whenever she issued them. Count Panine was the other *persona desiderata.* He was a Piedmontese, and a great philosopher. On being offered titles and honours, he, an arch-materialist, replied: " I lack cash! "

He was wont to say: "I was born poor; I have seen that nothing but money has value in our world, and I want money; to obtain it, I would set fire to the four corners of the town, including the royal palace! When I get money enough, I shall retire and live an honest man — like any other."

And, indeed, this Solon, having obtained the cash, did retire to his own land, where, we hope, he did also live like an honest man.

Meanwhile, the conspirators, having collected not only men wanting cash, but also those longing for titles and honours, thought it time to act.

It was an opportune moment; the Çzar talked of going off to the war to beat the Danes. He had been seen to go down on his knees to a portrait of Frederick the Great as to a holy picture, and, with uplifted hands, vociferated:

"My master, between us two, we shall conquer the world!"

To arrive at the goal contemplated by Catherine, two courses were open; to depose or to assassinate.

The second course is sure and facile; but the woman was impressionable and sensitive, and it was repugnant to her. She had formally restrained a captain of the guards, who asked to be allowed to poignard Peter in daylight amid his troops.

On the other hand, Count Panine, with assistants of the prying propensity, had taken a survey of the imperial sleeping-apartments, the ways in and the ways

CZAR PETER III.

out, to the most secret arrangements. The original plan was to rush in upon him, and, steel at his throat, force him to sign his abdication; that would earn him his life, for the time being.

During the plotting the Czar was at Peterhof. If the Empress stayed in town, that fact might cause suspicions, so she went to Peterhof as well; but she dwelt in a separate summer-house, on a canal to the Gulf of Finland, by which she might escape into Sweden if the plot should fail.

The next time Peter went back into the capital they were to attack him. But Captain Passek, who had urged instant murder, was always impatient and headlong; he uttered a word about the business before a soldier, who informed his superior. Passek was arrested. But for the Piedmontese's precaution, ruin would have befallen. He had set a watch on every man pledged, and the spy upon Passek notified the chiefs of his arrest. It was on the evening of the 8th July, 1762. At a quarter to ten, Princess Daschkoff was enlightened, and, as Panine called on her at ten, he was instructed. The lady, a woman who doubted nothing, cried for immediate action. Raise the garrison, and march upon Peterhof!

But Lord Panine was more timid; he doubly objected; a premature outburst would lose all, and success at St. Petersburg would only be a commencement of civil war, as the Emperor would be in a fortified place, Cronstadt, with three thousand of his personal

defenders, Holsteiners, without reckoning the regular troops which would flock to the imperial standard. The second objection: since the Empress was not on the spot, the plot would lose its strength, as the plotters would have none to whom to rally — her presence was absolutely necessary. So saying, it being midnight, he went home to sleep.

The princess was only eighteen, but she dressed like a man, and went alone to a trysting-place of the conspirators. All five Orloffs were there, enough to head as many regicides. She announced Passek's arrest, and urged instant action. They agreed in a transport. Alexis Orloff was only a private soldier. He was nicknamed "the Man with a Scar," from a slash across the face. He was strong, agile, and of great resolution. He sent the Empress a note, to be swallowed if the carrier were caught with it in hand, containing just these words:

"Come! Time presses!"

The rest arranged the movement, and that for the Empress's flight, if it miscarried.

At five in the morning, Orloff and his friend Bibikoff, each loading a pistol, exchanged them, swearing that they would reserve that shot to kill one another if the enterprise fell through.

Princess Daschkoff made no preparations, and being asked what she would do, replied that her fate was no business of hers, but would concern the executioner.

The Empress, at Peterhof, lived in an isolated house,

on a canal, as stated, communicating with the Baltic; a boat under the window could take her to sea.

The Czar was at Oranienbaum.

Some time back, Gregory Orloff, in calling on the Empress to confer upon the deed, had brought his brother Alexis with him, to familiarize him with the grounds as well as to look after his safety. So Alexis was able to reach the Empress by employing the passwords. Catherine was surprised to see one brother instead of the other.

"What has gone wrong?" she inquired.

Alexis handed her the note, and left her reading it. She dressed for the journey and ventured into the gardens. She was bewildered, without knowing whither to turn, when a horseman galloped up. He pointed to a carriage in waiting, saying:

"Yours!"

She went to it and found in it a confidential adherent. The vehicle had been in readiness for two days, by Princess Daschkoff's orders, on a near-by farm. In case the Czarina intended to flee by land, there were relays of horses for her to reach the frontier. The horses were eight in number; the drivers were peasants who knew nothing of the doings.

Getting in, the lady asked: "Where do we go?"

"To St. Petersburg," rejoined Alexis, "where all is ready for your Majesty to be proclaimed sole ruler!"

We will leave the pen to the Empress's own hand.

The story is continued by her in a curious letter, little known. She wrote it to Poniatowski.

"I was living alone at Peterhof, forgotten by everybody, and only domestics about me. My days were very restless, knowing what was going on for and against me. Early in the morning of the 28th June, Alexis Orloff brought me a message, but, after telling me to be off, — giving no details, — he left me. Without hesitation, I dressed for travelling, not having any maid to assist at my toilet. Going out, I found a carriage, behind which Alexis got up like a footman. Another officer, similarly passing for a lackey, opened and shut the door on me. A third met us a little out of St. Petersburg. Nearer still, I met the eldest Orloff with Prince Bariatinski — the younger. He yielded to me his place in his coach, for my horses were foundered, and we arrived at the Ismailof regimental barracks. A dozen men and drummers there set up an alarm. But the soldiers who ran up hailed me as their deliverer, and kissed the hem of my robe. They waylaid a passing priest, bore him in on their arms and began to swear allegiance to me on his cross. They begged me to get into a carriage, and formed a procession after it, with the good father carrying his cross like a standard. Thus we reached the Simianovski regimental quarters, where its men came out to meet us, shouting: 'Long life to the Empress!' I got out at Kasan Church, where the

Preobrajenski regiment welcomed me as they hurried up.

"'We crave pardon for being the last to come,' they said; 'but our officers curbed us; here are four of them that we held in hand to prove that we are not to blame. We wanted to act like our comrades.'

"The horse-guards came next. They were in such a fury of joy as I never beheld.

"This scene happened between the Hetman's Gardens and the Kasawski. The horse-guards were mounted, with their officers at the head. They hurrahed for the country's deliverance. As I knew that my uncle, to whom Paul had given this force, was horribly hated, I sent some foot-guards to his house for him to keep indoors for fear of accident. But his own men had already sent a detachment there, who knocked him about and pillaged the house.

"I went to the new Winter Palace, where the Synod and the Senate were assembled, hastily drawing up the manifesto and the oath of fidelity.

"There I alighted and on foot reviewed the troops, over fourteen thousand, guards and country regiments. At sight of me, their cheers broke forth, echoed by those of the innumerable people. I went to the old Winter Palace to take the necessary measures and finish with the business. The outcome of the consultation was that I ought to proceed with the troops to Peterhof, where Peter would probably be. As there were posts along the road, the peasants brought us

halters as significant of their wishes. Chancellor Woronzoff interfered, blaming me for going to town; but they dragged him away to make him take the oath of allegiance, — which was my answer. Prince Trubetskoi and Count Alexander Schuvaloff came to swerve the troops and kill me; but they were also prevailed to take the oath in my favour — all without any violence.

"After taking all precautions and sending out couriers, it being ten o'clock in the evening, I donned the Imperial Guards' uniform, and was proclaimed colonel, amid inexpressible enthusiasm. I mounted a horse, and, leaving just a few men out of each force to guard my son, left the town. I went off at the head of the military, and marched all night to Peterhof. At the Little Monastery, Vice-chancellor Galitzine brought me a very flattering letter from Peter. I forgot to say that three soldiers, sent out of Peterhof to post a manifesto to the people, gave it to me, and said:

"'Majesty, we were charged with this paper by Peter; but we give it to your Majesty and are glad to be able to join our comrades on the right side.'

"After the first imperial message came the second, brought by General Michael Ismailoff. He threw himself at my feet, saying:

"'Do you reckon me an honourable man?' As I assented, he went on: 'It is a pleasure to be among sane persons! The Emperor offers to resign. I will

bring him out after this very free resignation, as I wish to spare my country a civil war.'

"I made no objections to charging him with this errand, and he went back upon it.

"Peter was surrounded by fifteen hundred Holsteiners, but he freely surrendered the empire and departed for Peterhof from Oranienbaum, with his friends, St. Peter's Day, 29th June, at noon. I assigned to him, as guard, half a dozen officers and some privates. While we were all about to have dinner, the soldiery imagined that Peter had been brought out by Field-marshal Trubetskoi to make peace between us; they besought the Hetman of the Cossacks, Orloff and others passing, to tell me that they had not seen me for some three hours and that they feared that 'that old rogue Trubetskoi' was hatching up some pretended pact with me, which would ruin the lot of us, Empress and followers.

"'But we will make rags of them first!' they cried, which was their very expression.

"I bade Trubetskoi get into the carriage, while I reviewed the brave fellows on foot. He went back to town frightened, while I was acclaimed. After this, I sent Alexis Orloff, with four *selected* officers and some few *gentle and reasonable* soldiers to transport the deposed Czar to a place called Ropcha, away from Peterhof, *out of the way, but most pleasant;* while *honest and comfortable* lodgings at Schlusselburg were made ready. They were to take time and

provide relays of horses for the road. But kind Heaven otherwise disposed of matters. Peter fell so ill from fright, that, after ailing three days, he died on the fourth. He drank excessively, for he had full liberty of all save liberty. All he had called for from me was his negro servant, his violin, and his pet dog. They were sent him. His colic was carried by sympathy into his brain, and the two days' fever was followed by great weakness, and, despite the physicians, he passed away. He was so deeply hated that I was afraid that the officers around him might have *poisoned* him. It was found, though, that nothing but internal inflammation and a stroke of apoplexy carried him off."

This is the *official* report which the great Catherine put on paper for Russia through Poniatowski. It was all that any one was allowed to tell or to believe in her reign and up to the end of Nicholas's.

But what really occurred?

Let us oppose the true account with that with which the imperial actress hoodwinked the eighteenth century's eyes, but which has been torn away, piece by piece.

As she stated, Catherine was carried off by the eight horses. On the road she met her French hair-dresser, who did not know what had gone on, but thought that she was being removed to a nunnery by Peter's orders, at last. But she stuck her head out and called him to follow. He did so, but believed they were all

going to Siberia. She entered her future capital thus, in the eight-horse coach, accompanied by her lieutenant, her hair-dresser, and a confidential maid. So far, the Empress's recital and truth run side by side.

The revolution had been accomplished without any one thinking to inform the Czar. All had rallied around the Empress. Still, a barber named Bressan, attached to the Emperor, disguised a valet as a peasant, and sent him off to Peterhof. He carried a note for the Czar alone.

During this, under the Empress's order, an officer took a numerous escort to find the young Prince Imperial sleeping in another house. Waked up in the night, like little Czar Ivan, and seeing soldiers around him, he was so deeply frightened that his guardian Panine could not quiet him. He was taken to his mother in his night-clothes. As he was the lawful heir, she had need of him. She carried him out on the palace balcony, where the cheers increased and hats were tossed on high, and cries arose for "Paul the First!" But at the same time, the crowd, repulsed at one point, opened without any tumult. It was for a funeral procession. The low explanation sounded: "It is the Czar!"

The pompous and sombre pageant had already traversed the principal streets of St. Petersburg, and, crossing the Palace Place amid profound silence, went afar. The funeral guards had their helmets craped,

and carried torches. Whilst the catafalque held all attention, the young grand duke disappeared.

What was this dead body, carried to the grave with so much honour? Nobody ever knew. The Princess Daschkoff, questioned about the event, laughed and replied:

"Confess that we took our precautions fully!"

This show had two results: to prepare the people for the Emperor's death, and to make them forget the grand duke.

An army drunken with excitement surrounded the palace. But the joy was leavened with a fear skilfully kept alive by the Catherinites. It was whispered that twelve bravoes had left Oranienbaum, after swearing to Peter that they would kill the Empress and her son. The soldiers believed that their "Mother" was exposed to much danger in a palace with twenty outlets on the public square and its vast side bathed in the river. They loudly clamoured that she should be housed in a place where it could be surrounded by watchers. The Empress consenting, she was conveyed to a smaller house, the Wooden Palace, to which she crossed amid cheers and shouts of joy and devotion; and which was immediately engirt by a triple row of bayonets. All these soldiers had thrown off their pigtails and uniforms in the Prussian style, and were treated to satiety with brandy and beer. Now and then there was merry uproar: it was at a soldier joining them, still in his German suit; his

coat was rent to shreds and his helmet was made a football.

Finally the Church arrived, to sanctify the revolution, as it was soon going to bless the regicide. The clergy, bearing the ornaments for the consecration, the crown, imperial globe, and ancient books, slowly crossed through the military files, its majestic sight imposing respect, and entered the palace. In a quarter of an hour the declaration was made that Catherine was consecrated as Catherine the Second. She came forth amid the cheering in the guards' uniform and on horseback. The enthusiasm became frenzy. She had been perfectly equipped, but she had no sword-knot.

"Who will lend me his sword-tag?" she asked.

Five or six officers began to disengage their sword-knots, but a young lieutenant was the quickest and supplied the lady. He saluted, and was about to ride back to his place when the steed, from its habit as a file-horse, sidled up to the Empress's. She noted his efforts to control the rebel, and that he was a handsome blade.

"Your charger has more sense than you," she said; "he knows where his master's fortune rests! What is your name?"

"Potemkine, Majesty."

"Stay where you are, Potemkine, and be my aid-de-camp!"

This was the same Potemkine who was, in time, her all-powerful premier.

The newly crowned one went back to the palace, where she dined at an open window, while the forces filed past. Several times she raised her glass and drank to the army, which elicited cheers. The review over, she mounted again and led the forces away.

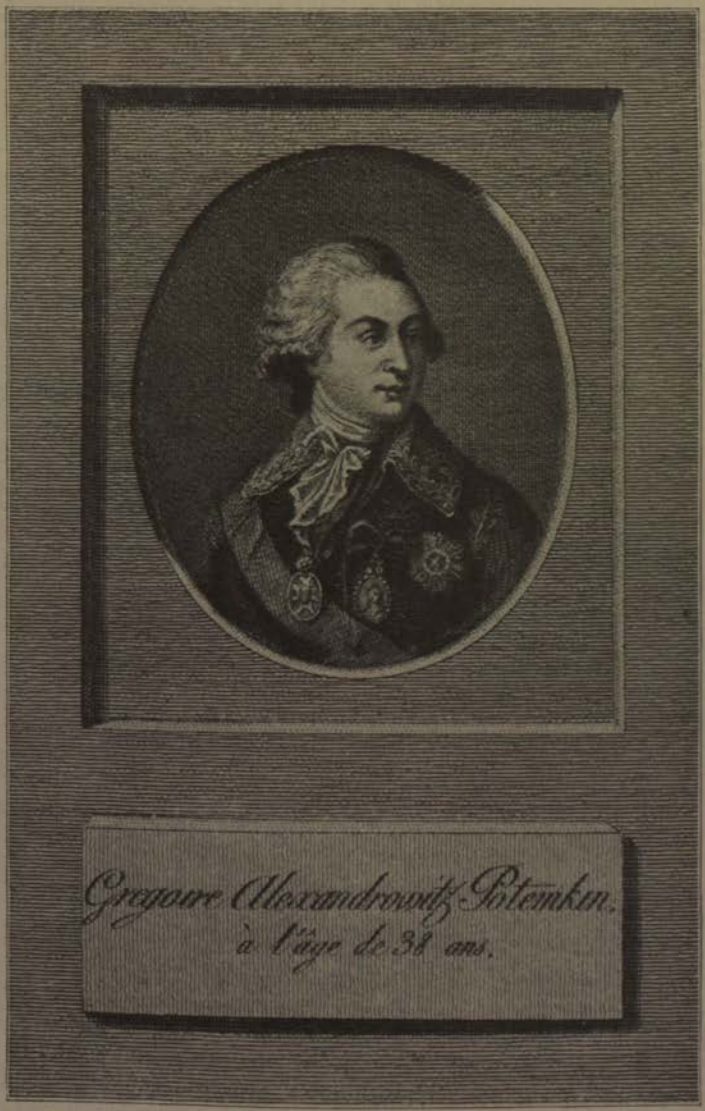
Potemkine was not asked after. Orloff had extended to him a hint that promotion to be an imperial aid depended on something more than a sword-knot.

Leaving the Empress to go into the campaign, let us look into Oranienbaum.

The Czar had determined to keep St. Peter's Day at Peterhof. He felt in utter security. Passek's arrest had been related to him, but he had merely remarked:

"It is some mad fellow!"

In the morning he started with a merry company; but at Peterhof the inhabitants were profoundly sad. At daybreak the Empress's flight had been discovered. She was vainly searched for till a sentinel declared that he had seen two ladies steal out. But those who came from St. Petersburg, having left before the revolt and Catherine's arrival, reported that all was quiet there. But the flight appeared serious enough to be repeated to the master. A chamberlain started, but he met on the road a courier from the Czar, his aid, Gudowitch. The castle messenger entrusted his message to him as he preferred not to deliver it; the mili-



COUNT POTEMKINE.

tary man rode back and stopped the imperial coach. But the inmate ordered the coach to advance, when the aid rode up to the window and whispered:

"Sire, the Empress has fled in the night, and is believed to be at St. Petersburg!"

"What a piece of nonsense!" commented Peter.

But the rider added a post-word in a still lower voice, which induced the hearer to turn pale and order the lackeys to let him out. It was remarked that his knees knocked as he stepped down. He leaned on the aid's arm and questioned him. As they happened to be at a part of the park open to the road, he said to the ladies:

"Alight and go straight to the house, where I shall join you, unless I am there before you."

The ladies obeyed, but in a tremor; they had heard only fragments and were lost in conjectures. The Czar entered the emptied coach and ordered Gudowitch to gallop alongside the door, and the coachman to drive to the house at full speed. He ran into the Empress's suite, as if he had not believed the news, and searched all about, prying everywhere and probing the panels with his cane. He was thus employed when the ladies arrived in still more disarray. He called out to them from the window, with some terror amid his agitation:

"She has gone! I told you that she is capable of any evil act!"

All kept silence, judging that the still dark situation

was ominous. Word arose that a young French lackey had arrived from the town with news of the Empress.

Bidden to enter, the pert footman gaily cried:

"Oh, the Empress is not lost! She is at St. Petersburg, and the St. Peter's Day is going to be magnificent!" He thought he was bringing welcome news.

"How so?" inquired the Czar.

"Because there is going to be a grand review of all the military!"

This terrible intelligence doubled the dismay. A peasant arrived with many bows and pulls at his hair. He drew a paper from his bosom and handed it to the Czar. This was the disguised valet, charged to take a message out of St. Petersburg for the monarch himself.

The note ran: "The Imperial Household Guards have revolted, and the Empress is at their head. It is nine o'clock, and she is entering Kasan Church. The populace follow the movement, and loyal subjects do not show themselves."

"You see, I was right," observed the autocrat.

Chancellor Woronzoff, uncle to the imperial favourite and to Princess Daschkoff, having thus a footing in each camp, offered to go to town and negotiate. His offer was accepted, and he set off instantly, but, as seen, it was only to go over to the rebellion. Only, being a prudent man, he settled that he should not be

obliged to follow the military movements, but be put under arrest, with an officer at his door. As he had sworn allegiance to Catherine, he was her friend; as he was under arrest, he was not Peter's foe.

Peter was preparing for the storm. He had fifteen hundred Holsteiners on whom he could depend. In eyesight was Cronstadt, impregnable. He began by ordering his Holsteiners to come up quickly and with their field-guns. Hussars were sent out to scour the roads by which the enemy might debouch from St. Petersburg. Couriers rode into the villages to muster the countrymen; and messengers went forth to all the military quarters adjacent, to bring all the soldiery to Oranienbaum.

Over all the forces he appointed the generalissimo in the chamberlain who had brought the tidings of the outbreak. These measures taken, — as though his head was incapable of more than one sane idea for a time, — he issued the most fanciful orders: the Empress was to be slain at sight; his own regiment was to be brought from the capital; he raced about or he sat down abruptly. He dictated manifestoes against his consort, full of scathing insults; he had them transcribed by copyists and dispersed by hussars in all directions; then, noticing his Prussian uniform, he cast it off and donned the former Russian one, loading the breast with his own decorations.

The court was prostrated, in the gardens.

Suddenly Peter roared with glee; they had ushered

in to him old Count Munich, who, for his saving him out of Siberia, came to him with gratitude — or from a lingering spark of ambition. The succour was so unexpected that the Emperor flung himself into the aged warrior's arms, and cried:

"Save me, Munich, I have nobody to rely on but you!"

But the old war-dog was not excitable; he had looked coldly at the situation.

"Sire," he said, "in a few hours the Czarina will be here with twenty thousand men and formidable artillery. Neither Peterhof nor Oranienbaum can hold out. However steady the troops may be, their resistance will only lead to your Majesty and adherents being butchered. Safety and victory are at Cronstadt, and nowhere else."

"Explain yourself, Munich!" appealed the ruler.

"Cronstadt has a numerous garrison, and by it is the important fleet. Such a raking-together as the Empress has surrounded herself with will soon disperse; or, if not, we shall meet on equal terms — you with your Holsteiners, the fleet, and the garrison."

This deliverance restored calm to the besieged; a general went over to Cronstadt, whence he sent his aid to report that the garrison stood firm and would die for their Father, if he would trust himself to them. From his panic, the poor idiot passed into boundless conceit. He reviewed his Holsteiners, and, enchanted with their brave front, chattered:

"You must not quit without at least seeing the foe!"

Munich, who was for immediate retreat, had commanded the two yachts to be made ready, and vainly tried to embark the Czar. Unfortunately for his plans and for those to fortify the heights on the coasts, an aid arrived at eight o'clock, preceding by a little the Empress, with twenty thousand men, marching on the imperial summer resort, and only a few miles off. No one wanted to "see the enemy" any more closely. Followed by all the court, the despot rushed to the landing, where they tumbled into the rowboats, yelling:

"Take us out to the yachts!"

"Are you not coming?" the Emperor asked a favourite courtier.

"Pray excuse me, Sire, for the wind is out of the north, and I have no overcoat," replied the tender man, who, in another two hours, was bowing to the Czarina, and relating jocosely how the embarkation had been managed.

But in the morning Admiral Talitzine had gone over to Cronstadt in an open boat, forbidding his boatmen to say whence he came.

He was obliged to await the governor's permission before he could land. But, hearing his rank and that he came alone, the governor came out, and, allowing the landing, asked the news.

"I have nothing positive," replied the naval chief.

"I was at my country-house when I heard of some stir, and thought I ought to come here and take my place on the fleet."

The governor believed this, and went indoors. Talitzine at once suggested to some soldiers whom he assembled to arrest the commandant, for the Emperor was dethroned and the Empress consecrated in his stead. All who sided with her would be richly rewarded. If they handed over Cronstadt to the Empress, their fortune was ensured. All followed him; the governor was apprehended, and the garrison and marines turned out to hear the admiral. He harangued them into swearing fealty to the new ruler. By this time the two pleasure craft were in sight. The Czar's presence might undo all the gain. Talitzine had the alarm-bell rung. Two hundred gunners stood to their pieces along the ramparts, and, with lighted matches, waited for the targets. The imperial yacht arrived at ten in the evening and prepared to set the illustrious passenger ashore. But the ship was challenged from the fort.

"The Czar!" was the answer.

"There is no longer a Czar!" responded Talitzine, "and if you forge another fathom ahead, I shall order that you be blown out of the water!"

The hubbub was frightful on board the imperial yacht: the captain believed he heard the balls already whistle around him, and shouted back:

"Hold your fire! we are making off, are we not? Give us time to go about, can't ye?"

The vessels turned and fled, pursued by shouts of "Long live the Empress Catherine!"

The Emperor was weeping and wailing: "I see that the plot was a wide one!"

He tottered down into the cabin, more dead than alive. Out of range, the yachts lay to, but the Emperor could not decide on any course. So they ran home between the forts and the other coast. That took the night.

Munich trod the deck calmly, and asked himself:

"What the deuce tempted me into this galley?"

In the meantime, the Czarina's troops had reached Peterhof, where they expected to have the Holsteiners to combat. But, seeing the Emperor abandon them, they had levanted likewise; all the defenders were some countrymen armed with flails and forks. Orloff, being the scout, did not balk at the numbers of the *mujiks,* but charged them with the flat of the sword, and dispersed them to the tune of "The Empress for ever!"

The main body coming up, the Empress triumphantly walked into the house which she had quitted only twenty-four hours previously as a fugitive.

On the yacht, Peter had been conferring with Munich and begging his counsel.

"Field-marshal, I ought to have followed your advice, and I repent not having done so. But you have

seen so many extremities that I wish you to tell me what to do now."

"Sire, nothing is lost if you will listen to me. At once let us clap on sail, put the sweeps out, and so force the passage of the forts. Arriving at Revel, we will take a man-of-war and go to Prussia, where your army of eighty thousand men is to be found; with them return, and, in six weeks, I guarantee to your Majesty that he will be more mighty than heretofore."

Courtiers, crept in to hear what might be life or death, remained to hope or dread.

"But," ventured one as mouthpiece, "the men are too weary to do much rowing."

"When they are weary," replied Munich, "we will take the oars ourselves!"

The prospect had no welcome among the enervated gadflies. They asserted the situation to be far from desperate; so mighty a monarch ought not to flee from his domains; it was impossible that all Russia had risen against him, and the upshot of the rising would only end in reconciliation with his Czarina. The master embraced this picture, decided on reconciliation, and was disembarked at Oranienbaum, convinced that he had nothing to do but pardon. On the waterside he found the servants in woe, and their consternation revived all his fears.

The Empress was marching upon Oranienbaum.

He had a fleet horse saddled, planning to disguise himself and gallop off into Poland.

But one of the ladies offered to be envoy to the Empress and try to induce her to let him go to Holstein. The domestics fell on their knees and wailed: "Do not trust her! she will be the death of our Father!" He would not listen to them, and the woman waved them away, saying:

"Wretches, what interest have you in frightening the 'Little Father'?"

Peter went farther in the retreat than she; he ordered the little fortress to be battered down and the cannon dismounted, with which he had played at the war-game. Munich, as a veteran, was maddened by this, and tore out his white locks.

"If you do not know how to die at the head of your troops, like an Emperor," he sneered, "go out to them with a crucifix in your hand — they will spare you then, while I do a soldier's duty."

But, no doubt because his resolve was bad, the despot persisted; but he wrote a letter to the Empress, offering share in the power and reconciliation. Receiving no response, he wrote another, begging a pension and a harbour at Holstein. Then, Catherine sent him a form of abdication — it was almost on file in Russian headquarters — by General Ismailoff. The bearer was charged to inform the fallen Majesty that the lady had persons in her train so exasperated against him

that she would not answer for his life, if he did not sign.

Ismailoff entered the imperial presence, accompanied by only one servant, but he promptly said, on the Czar wavering:

"Then I arrest you in the Empress's name!"

"But I am going to sign," whined the autocrat, in haste.

But it was required that the deed of renunciation should be in his hand, and he executed it and, sighing, appended his signature. He made a note on another sheet of paper: "I desire to have sent to me my dog Mopre, Narcisse, my negro, my violin, some romances, and my German Bible."

All was not finished, for Ismailoff had the duty to deprive him of the grand *cordon* of the principal Russian order of knighthood, to humble him. Then he was taken in a carriage to Peterhof. As he passed through the bodies of soldiery, they taunted him with cheers for "Catherine!"

On arriving at the main staircase, the Emperor stepped out first, and then his favourite, Elizabeth Woronzoff. Scarcely had she alighted, than the soldiers buffeted her about, snatched off her decorations and rent her garments. Gudowitch following, they hooted him, but he returned the compliment by calling them traitors, cowards, and scoundrels. A mob of soldiers bore him away as they had Lady Woronzoff.

So the Emperor had to totter up the stairs alone, weeping with rage. Ten or a dozen soldiers followed him closely and ordered him to throw off his things, despoiling him of his sword, which had been allowed him, and his coat. But they threatened to remove all, and he was for ten minutes exposed to the ridicule of the horde, in bare feet and shirt. At last some one tossed an old dressing-gown upon him, and let him drop into a chair, where he hung his head, stopped up his ears, and covered his eyes, as if not to know what went on around him.

In the interval, the Empress was holding audience with a new court. All who had been grovelling to the deposed one the last three days were fawning to her. All the Woronzoff family were offering homage. The Empress took the ornaments Elizabeth Woronzoff had been stripped of, and gave them to her sister, who accepted them eagerly without any demur.

Munich came to tender his submission in his blunt way, saying:

"Upon my word, madame, I have been a long while coming to the opinion which was the man, you, or Lord Peter, and as it has decisively appeared that 'Thou art the Man!' I come to you."

"Munich, you tried to fight with me!" accused the Empress.

"I own to it, but that's my trade. But my duty now is to fight for you."

"But you do not allude to the advice you can

afford me, count, the fruit of the period you have spent in warfare and — exile!"

"My life being yours, the experience is yours likewise."

The same day Catherine returned to St. Petersburg, where it was more triumph than her march-out. On the following day she despatched the imperial captive to Ropcha, under Alexis's command, followed by the "four selected officers" and "the gentle and reasonable men," to use her words. Among these were Teploff, the youngest of the Bariatinski princes, and Potemkine, the officer who lent sword-knots. Five or six days after the Emperor was lodged, Teploff and Alexis Orloff, leaving Potemkine and Bariatinski in the outer room, entered the parlour, and hinted, as the prisoner was about to breakfast, that they would be thankful for the honour of eating with him. According to Russian table manners, they began by eating salted appetizers and drinking brandy.

Alexis presented the Emperor with a glass of spirits. As they had eaten bread and salt together, according to another Russian belief, guest and host were sacred; so that the latter might take the libation without distrust. But it was drugged; for at the end of a short space he suffered atrocious pain. Out of the same bottle Orloff wished to force on him another draught. But Peter refused, and there was a conflict between them, during which the Czar called for help.

As before said, Alexis was of prodigious strength.

COUNT ORLOFF.

He threw himself upon the host, bore him back upon the bed, held him down under his knee, and throttled him while, it is averred, Teploff stabbed him with a heated ramrod. The screams overheard weakened, and finally died away.

Peter III., entrusted to "four selected officers and some gentle and reasonable guards," died, if you believe Catherine, an Empress, "of inflammation and apoplexy."

The same day a messenger broke in upon her dinner with a missive which warranted such haste. Coming from Alexis Orloff, it was thus couched:

"EMPRESS, OUR BELOVED MOTHER: — How can I tell you what has happened? It is truly fatality! We went in to see your husband, and, taking wine with him, it put us in such a drunken mood that words arose — and we were so hotly insulted that we came to blows. Suddenly we saw him drop dead. What are we to do? Take our heads, if you wish; or, dear Mother, think that what is past cannot be undone, and forgive us our mishap. ALEXIS ORLOFF."

This "Clement Mother" not only forgave Orloff, but made him a count of the Roman Empire.

The imperial victim to "the mishap through drink," lay in state at the Newsk Monastery, and was buried there. It was remarked that the neck was scratched and the face black; but the question was not how he

died, but was he dead? "The False Demetrius" was in mind, and Pugetchef was foreshadowed.

Not infrequently the remorse of the great crowned homicides who employ murderers takes the form of treating these bravos meanly. This cannot be said of Catherine. Her crime was not hushed up, for, when Voltaire styled her "the Northern Semiramis," he alluded to the original Empress slaying Ninus by poison.

Sir James Harris, the English envoy to St. Petersburg, a grave statistician, for he was correspondent for a mercantile house, wrote:

"From 1762 to 1783, the Orloff family have drawn from the state seventeen million rubles, as well as profited by forty-five thousand serfs." He adds of Potemkine, the man well paid for his sword-knot, "In two years of *favour,* he received thirty-seven thousand serfs in Russia, and in mansions, plate, and jewels, nine millions of rubles, to say nothing of appointments all of cash income; and he was created Prince of the Holy Roman Empire, dating from three generations." But the "protected" lord did not lose favour or die till 1791, nine years subsequently. At the rate of two years, then, he must have lorded it over 150,000 serfs, and enjoyed more than fifty millions! It is true that he made some return to his munificent mistress.

She owed to him the Tauridus (Taurus) Palace, in memory of the campaign in the Crimea, when he annexed that province to Russia. The astonishing

point about the structure is not the magnificent furniture, the marbles, the lakes of goldfish, or the golden peacock which expands its tail, or yet the gold cock which crows, — they were removed to the Hermitage (with the golden tree), — but that it should have been built — a palace covering six acres with its park — in the midst of a capital, and Catherine should not know anything about it! Potemkine, who had trees carried about in winter so as to plant them daily at the country-houses where his mistress stopped for a night, and who presented her in mid-January with baskets of cherries costing ten thousand rubles! — he had accustomed her to surprises — but with what scrupulousness that secret was kept — in Russia! One evening, the new Aladdin invited the Empress to a festival in a spot which she only knew as being a swamp. But, blazing with lights, flowing with music, and spangled with blowing flowers, she was dazzled by a fairy palace.

We had the luck to enjoy the acquaintance of his niece, the Countess Braninka, in whose arms he died; it is she who enables us to give some particulars which historians did not know.

But if only an upstart prince, he lived in princely fashion. I have seen the silk factory where he took all the product, wearing silk hose only once and making presents with the surplus. But he is credited with disbursing a million rubles annually. In serving the country, his sword-knot saw fire: not only did he win

Crimea, but he fought the Turks in person, carrying three of their fortified towns by storm. In 1791, he returned to the capital to find that he was really replaced by Zuboff. That was nothing, if he had still his old influence, but the imperial lady — now imperious — did everything contrary to his suggestions. Wishing to continue a war, he started for the Crimea to persuade her against signing peace. But, at Jassy, he learnt that she had yielded, and he took it to heart, for he died there, stopping his carriage to get out and lie down on a cloak by the roadside.

Michelet is severe toward "the German Adventuress," but he dissected her from his point of abhorrence for her wrecking Poland. In the same way as Peter the Great could not hope to save Russia without slaying Alexis, so Catherine could not continue Peter's work without freeing herself of Peter III. We cannot be accused of partiality toward monarchs, but we do not think that the historian — and the romancist is only the popular historian — has any right to be unfair toward kings, as kings. A crime is a crime, but there are extenuating circumstances before the bar of posterity. You do not class on the same page Tell killing Gessler to deliver Switzerland, and a brute murdering a cook to steal a sausage. At St. Petersburg, measure the work accomplished by Peter III.'s widow, and render her justice — she is Catherine THE GREAT.

CHAPTER IX.

A ROMANCE OF THE RUSSIAN BASTILE

(1764)

About the year 1764, there was a queen of beauty in the festivals at Pisa, Florence, and Leghorn, called the Princess Helena Tarakanoff. The belle was but twenty. She was undoubtedly lovely, and she enjoyed an unlimited income. She had come, in childhood, from St. Petersburg to Florence, and throve as a northern plant might be expected to do under the blessed sun of the country where Michelangelo and Raphael flourished. Nothing official was known about her, and so her charm was augmented by the mystery enveloping her, like those clouds enhancing the goddesses, when they deigned to appear among bewitched mortals.

Two persons discovered that she was daughter of the Empress Elizabeth of Russia, one seeking her through ambition and the other by hatred. They were Prince Charles Radziwill and Prince Gregory Orloff.

Radziwill, Prince Palatine of Wilna, a deadly foe of the Russians, appointed governor of Lithuania, in 1762, by the Elector Augustus III. of Saxony, had

set himself up as candidate against Prince Poniatowski to the Polish throne. But his ambition soared higher still. He bore in mind the ancient grandeur of Poland, when it gave sovereigns to Bohemia and Hungary, acquired half Western Prussia, with rule over the eastern portion, and, joining Courland to all that, united Livonia to it, until it annexed Moscow.

The same Moscow as the Polacks took in 1611 might be retaken in 1765, whereon Radziwill could don the crown of the Jagellons and Monomaches. You will grant that it was a lofty project; but, as he was as great a politician as soldier, he dreamt of another matter. If he could win the Princess Tarakanoff and become her wedded husband, this alliance to the imperial daughter, with Moscow his seat, would facilitate his assumption of power over the Muscovite. Her birth should be publicly proclaimed, of course. The poor lady was unaware of these schemes; all she saw was a count-palatine, still young, handsome, and elegant, whose attentions she might receive. The rumour soon spread that Charles was about to marry the Princess Tarakanoff, daughter of the Empress Elizabeth. It spread so widely and so far as to reach the Russian court, where the Empress Catherine II. was reigning.

Catherine was given cause for dread, for she divined Prince Charles's combination. Had she all in vain overturned hindrances, only for them to revive? She had let Peter III. be strangled, the young

Ivan be assassinated, and yet here started out of Italy a pretender to her throne, of whom she had never had a thought! If Helena had been in Russia or in the vicinity, where she could stretch out her hand! But how strike in the Grand Duke of Florence's territory?

She had to apply to her good friends, the Orloffs, who were never embarrassed.

Catherine let transpire her intention to support Stanislaus Poniatowski for King of Poland, a proposition sure to draw Radziwill back to Warsaw, so that he must leave the fair princess without defence.

All Orloff had to do was to take three ships and go to Italy. The ostensible aim of his voyage was to buy art objects, pictures, statues, and the like, and engage artists. The hidden aim was not to be disclosed till the proper time. Orloff sailed with his golden argosies. They were lucky, for, without mishap, they cast anchor in Leghorn Bay.

It was July, when the beaux and belles of Tuscany had gone to the seaside to inhale the Mediterranean breezes and take the briny baths. Curiosity was vividly aroused by the advent of Gregory Orloff, the man who had taken the principal part in the 1762 revolution, and was the great Catherine's favourite. He had some blood-stains on him, but it was Alexis, and not Gregory, Orloff who had had that little dispute with the Emperor Peter III., ending with the noble's neckcloth being tied too tightly for free breathing around

the Czar's neck; but, in politics, a crime so happily succeeding is scarcely a crime at all. Why should not man overlook what Heaven did not hasten to punish?

So Gregory Orloff was welcomed, made much of, caressed and feasted. He could bend iron bars like "Porthos," roll up a silver dish like Augustus of Saxony, and scatter coin like a Duke of Buckingham. He had the greatest success among the Florentines. But he had not come there to court the Biancas, since it was for his fair fellow countrywoman, the Princess Tarakanoff, for whom were his cares, presents, and assiduity. Soon the tale went the rounds that the Empress's favourite was liable to be unfaithful to her Majesty, for a lady almost as illustrious, younger, and lovelier. He revealed to the dupe matters of which she was ignorant.

He had spoken of an origin which, cross-barred though it was, might have more weight in true Russian eyes than Catherine's marriage with Peter III., which was violently broken off. Who was this Catherine, when one came to reason upon it? A princess of Anhalt-Zerbst, merely a German, who had not a drop of Romanoff blood in her. As for young Paul I., there were such doubts about him that he was on the same shelf as Helena herself. There were doubts about Elizabeth, too. In any event, the point was to meet with a hand strong enough to hold her on her throne after putting her there. Talking of the strong

hand, Orloff's manual power was celebrated. In his palm the princess was as a feather. And the advocate's eyes were so tender in discussing politics, that it was very evident that, in pleading for her, he was pleading his own cause. Orloff did not conceal his ambition. He bitterly inveighed against the Empress Catherine. He had so well served her that he had a right to claim public recompense, and, at the least, she ought to have raised him higher than a mere captaincy in the Royal Guards.

Helena was not ambitious, but she was a coquette. Orloff happened to carry in his baggage an imperial Russian diadem. This ought to have been in the royal treasury in Moscow, and it might be marvelled how he came to own it. In showing the gem to Helena, Orloff set it on her fair head, and it fitted as if made for it. The princess tried to fancy how she would look in the rest of the coronation outfit.

She had very properly spoken of her engagement with Prince Radziwill. But what was the eventuality in that direction? He would have to be elected King of Poland, vanquish the Russians, and earn a victory so complete that it would open Moscow gates to him. In short, a triple miracle, and Providence was not providing miracles to benefit Poland any longer.

If the princess began to listen to the tempter with doubt, she now listened with the mute silence of hope. Orloff, artful tantalizer that he was, left her dandling the imperial diadem, a brilliant reality in the day and

a splendid dream in the night. And all this courtship passed among balls, galas, regattas, under the blazing sun, amid artistic enchantments, nature's blessings and æsthetic masterpieces. Orloff had become the hero for all the magnificoes. The black Italian eyes were fastened on him with envy and desire. But the only gaze precious to him was the mysterious young princess's.

Soon it was published that the Russian, in acknowledgment of the generous reception, was going to repay it with a glorious *ridotto*. It was loudly said that it was in honour of the beauties of Florence and Leghorn, but in a whisper it was averred that Orloff's fair compatriot would be the queen of the fête. Great preparations were certainly made on the Russian flagship. At last the occasion was officially announced. The invitations were so cleverly comprehensive that no one felt slighted.

The appointed day was anxiously awaited. The ship, on account of her being moored in deep water, outside the roads, was a blaze of lights and port-fires. It might be likened to Cleopatra's galley. In skiffs, ornamented with flowers, all the boatmen, in their best clothes, stood up to welcome their fares going out to the frigate. The flotilla was freighted with silk, satin, and gauze, while jewels sparkled as if it were a Wedding of the Sea to the Haven.

The cutter of the war-ship's captain led the fleet; under a purple awning lounged the Princess Helena

on Persian carpets — like an imperial child. Orloff waited for her at the ship's side, at the gangway. The merrymaking was extravagant, and lasted till dawn. The princess had all the honours. When the fresh morning breeze arose, "the living flowers," — the ladies, — shivering like the blossoms in Dante's verse, draped themselves in their plush-lined mantles, to be rowed shoreward. Princess Tarakanoff lingered to the last. Of what was the dainty plotter babbling: Love or Ambition? As the belated creature was about to step down the swinging steps, they were hauled up and swung afar out at the yard-arm's end. She was drawn back. She felt the bound of the ship released, like a charger given the rein. Wind and tide were imparting a strong impulsion to the ship. Her anchor had been heaved up and the sails unfurled. She was well under way when the gazelle realized that she was entrapped. The princess was a prisoner.

At once the gallant cavalier became the sombre executioner for the ferocious Catherine. The lady in ball dress, lace, and gems was consigned to be a pariah of that world in little — a man-of-war. She had no place to lay her head, for there is no room on the floating microcosm for one "not numbered on the books." Helena was refused food and water, for the orders were strict. Finally, in rags, drinking at the scuppers when it rained, lamed, maimed by being thrown about in her weak and uninured state, the laughing-stock of the crew and the target for the

cabin-boys' and powder-monkeys' jeers, she was fain, like the Prodigal Son, to eat of the husks disdained by the ship's pig. She became scullion to the negro cook, paring the vegetables for the sailors' messes. The voyage was long, and there was time for her to have died of any of the deaths a hundred times menacing her. But Helena was alive at Cronstadt, where the frigate cast anchor and Orloff disembarked to report to his imperial mistress.

That same evening a boat, covered in with canvas like a gondola, used by the Empress for nightly trips on the Neva, reached the admiral's ship-side, and was rowed up the river, to stop before the fortress. Out of the bark, wrapped in a long veil, which allowed nothing to be distinguished of the sex, the form, or the face, a woman was taken, and the officer and four marines marched her up to the citadel gates. He had an order for the governor. Without making a remark, the latter beckoned a turnkey to come to him, pointed to a number inscribed on the wall, and took the lead in a grim procession.

"Follow the governor," said the jailer to the woman, who obeyed like a whipped dog.

The courtyard was crossed, a postern door opened, twenty steps were descended, a door numbered "56" was opened, and the woman shoved into the sepulchre. Empress Elizabeth's daughter, the Princess Helena Tarakanoff, the marvellous being apparently made of mother-of-pearl, ermine, satin, velvet, and

diamonds, was flung half-clad, in tatters, into a damp and darksome dungeon of the St. Andrew Ravelin.

Beneath the Neva level, the waters incessantly dashed up against the walls. The only light came through a loophole, so contrived that, though the incarcerated one might peep at the sky, not one star there could peer down in upon her. As if in nature's sympathy, great tears welled out of these clammy apertures and poured down the slimy stones, cold, as if out of a freezing eye, and formed pools on the floor. In this mud was thrown some straw, half-soddened, — and this was the princess's bed! It had no superiority to that of the ship-deck but in having a roof above. She who had known what down and linen were, and had believed that she could not survive that horrid voyage, and now was sure that she would not survive this pit for a month, she languished there — twelve years!

On her knees, with her withering hands clasped, she implored her jailers at least to tell her for what crime this penalty was exacted, — all in that gentle Italian tongue made for love and prayer, — but they never answered by a look. Ceasing to appeal and weep, she almost ceased to whine and whimper. She lived as reptiles do, which sometimes she felt crawl over her hollow cheeks and on her icy hands. She grew not only heedless, but insensible to outer sounds. Since some days she had heard the Neva's waves become billows and roar with greatest violence; but this had happened so many times before, in a dozen

years. She heard the cannon thunder: a flood was signalled. The flood usually, on reaching the loophole edge, stopped. But now it lapped in and crept down the walls. Then it spouted. She could not doubt — she would be drowned in a given time. The Neva was "up."

She was but thirty-two yet, and comprehended the danger. Miserable as was her existence, she saw that death was more miserable.

The water was up to her knees by this. She called and she screamed. She lifted a slab which she could not have stirred in her strongest days and pounded on the door. A keeper deigned to look in at the wicket.

"What is wanted here?" he demanded.

"Let me out — oh, let me out!" shrieked the poor woman. "Don't you see that the cell is filling with water? Put me where else you will, but don't drown me like a kitten!"

"No one leaves his place here unless by the Empress's orders," was the reply.

She flew at the little peep-hole door, but he pushed her in the face so brutally that she fell back in the chilly water. When she rose, she went to the part where the floor was a trifle higher. The more the sea came in, the greater it was in volume. She was an *aquameter,* and could tell how fast it was rising! In the evening she was heard to shriek horribly, or, in prayerful tones, ejaculate *"Dio!"* in Italian. Al-

most all through the night these vociferations were audible, more and more lamentable and heartrending, and they were the more touching when marred by the gurgling, as if now and then the sufferer swallowed the brine.

At about four in the morning the cries ceased. When the flood was over and the waters had receded, the jailers went to the princess's cell and found her a corpse. No order was needed from the Empress to take her out now! A pit was dug in the frozen earth by the ramparts, and therein she was buried, in the night-time. To-day, by a sign, a nudge, a wink, or a pointed finger, a stone block is indicated, where the soldiers sit to play cards or chat. It is the sole monument to the Empress Elizabeth's daughter — the only souvenir of the hapless Helena.

CHAPTER X.

A ROMANCE OF THE FRIGID NEVA

(1798)

LIKE all citadels, the fortress of St. Petersburg is built to be a visible symbol of the antagonism between sovereign and subjects.

Granted, it defends the town, but it threatens it a great deal more; it was erected to repel the Swedes, but it serves to overawe the Russians. It is the Muscovite Bastile, and, like the French one, imprisons intellect as well as body. Its story will be dreadful to write, for it has seen everything and heard all, too, but never has it revealed anything. When comes the day for its interior to be laid open, like the Paris Bastile, its dungeons, by their blackness, depth, and fatal humidity, will appal. It will have a voice like Stentor's. Then Russia will boast a history: so far, it has but romances. One of these I am going to relate.

In the month of September, 1855, a friend of mine was hunting a hundred versts out Pereslof way, from Moscow. The pursuit had allured him so far that he could not get home that evening. He spied a little

country-house, owned these fifty odd years by a gentleman who had always tenanted it. He was twenty years old when he came here, but no one knew whence he came or who he was, or how he had acquired the place. During ten years he had no visitors, made no acquaintances, and spoke no more than was strictly needed. Although the estate was large enough to maintain five hundred tillers, and brought him in some five thousand rubles a year, he had never been married. This property was situated between Troitka Monastery and the petty town of Pereslof.

Although this person, by repute, was far from hospitable, our sportsman did not hesitate to ask his leave to pass the night under his roof, if only to have a seat and a share of the supper. Even the Russian cottager does not refuse the stove-side to the traveller, and less likely would the Russian gentleman turn a cold shoulder on his fellow countryman. Under the Emperor Alexander only did the term of "fellow citizen" spring up.

As it was seven o'clock, the twilight was dying and the dark came on, brought by that keen evening breeze foretelling the winter three weeks ahead, when the wayfarer knocked at the *palate* door. So are named such habitations, a little less than mansion and a little more than villa. At the rapping, an old serving-man came and opened it. The stranger expressed his quandary. The servant begged him to wait a moment, while he went to repeat the desire to the master. In

five minutes he was back in the antechamber, and invited the hunter to walk in.

He found the host at table with a neighbour, whom he recognized as an old friend of his father's. So here was a recommendation for the self-invited visitor, in case the host went back on his word. But there was no fear, and the householder rose, came to him, and asked him to sit at the board.

He was a handsome old man of over seventy; his quick eye was somewhat disquieted; he was robust; and his hair and his beard were so thick that their whiteness did not detract from his evidences of vigour. He wore the country dress in all strictness: knee-high boots, full black velvet breeches tucked in them, gray cloth double-breasted coat, and an astrachan-trimmed cap.

The meal was nearing its end, for the two were smoking over a cup of tea. The old gentleman ordered the remainder of the dinner to be put back on the table, while apologizing to the guest for having to treat him so far below his wishes in the matter. At any rate, the "left-overs" were ample to satiate the most hungry hunter. The latter ate so quickly that he caught up with the other guests when they had reached their third or fourth cigar and the fifth or sixth cup of tea. Of course, the two acquaintances had at once exchanged greetings, and the master of the house knew that they were friends. The conversation turned on topics of the time. The Czar

Nicholas had died on the 18th of February of this year, and Alexander II. had opened his succession by acts and speeches promising the country such a future as she had not dared to expect. Contrary to the habits of his age, the old landlord, not bewailing the past, appeared happy over the change of rule, and breathed deep, like one long oppressed under a stone ceiling and enjoying a liberty regained with delight.

The chat singularly interested the newcomer; for the host's prodigious memory enabled him to prattle of times remote as though they had happened yesterday. He recalled the Empress Catherine II., and those notables of a previous generation, — Orloffs, Potemkines, Zuboffs, — who appeared to his younger hearers like spectres of a vanished era. Therefore he must have dwelt in St. Petersburg before he came to his estate; touching elbows with the courtiers before retiring among his serfs. This loquacity astounded the latest guest, for his host did not possess the reputation of a gossip. No doubt the pressure to speak was the greater from his having been silenced a long while. He even responded with much complaisance to the young man's plentiful questions. Still, marked circumspection held the latter, who did not risk venturing a query which worried him, namely:

"How could a gentleman of this position quit the capital so early in life to vegetate in this rustic life?"

When the host had stepped out of the room for a

moment, he addressed this inquiry to his father's old friend, who replied:

"I am no better informed than you on that head, though I have been nigh thirty years acquainted with our mysterious neighbour. But I am under the impression that he was going to make a clean breast of it all — if you, as a stranger, had not dropped in! He was about to speak, and it is the first time I ever saw him so open!"

The host returned, and, as it was a breach of hospitality for the newcomer to be a wet blanket on the old cronies, he got up. He begged to be shown the room intended for him. The next room was indicated. Only a thin partition separated it from the dining-room, and, as if this were not enough temptation to listen, the host left the door open behind him. The guest was aware that he might not get a peep into the side-room, but he could hear every word. It was a temptation for a saint!

But I will do this piece of justice to my friend, to say that he did try to nod off, so as not to play the eavesdropper. But it was in vain that he turned and twisted on his divan, shut his eyes, and drew the coverlet over them, for sleep seemed to flee with as much obstinacy as his in wooing it. If it did appear to bow to his yearning, it was only to leave at the supreme moment when thoughts become muddled, and through the closed lids one thinks to see phantoms sailing around, and hear dogs scratching at the door,

or bats rapping at the window-panes — he would fully awake with widely distended eyes, and his ear would turn, despite his will, toward the door ajar, which allowed the light to stream in, together with the words. He deemed it his duty to notify his neighbourhood, if not his presence, at the colloquy; but at each notice in sneezing, coughing, and yawning, the conversation ceased, it is true, but to go on again when the interruption ended.

For a stretch of five minutes he had the imprudence to pause and try to think of alien things which usually overbalance what is being thundered into one's ear; but the scales remained even, and, while all within was hushed, he could but hear the first words of a revelation of which he had wished a hint, and, having heard the first words, he had not the strength to close his ears to the following.

As the old man told the tale, we tell it:

I was only in my eighteenth year (began the host), and yet I had been ensign for two years in the Paulovski Regiment. It was in barracks in the large building still standing on the other side of the *Champ de Mars*, over against the Summer Garden. The Emperor Paul had been reigning three years, and dwelt in the Red Palace, just finished.

One evening, when I had been refused leave of absence because of some boyish prank, and was by myself in the dormitory of the subalterns of my grade,

I was aroused from slumber by a voice close to my ear, which whispered:

"Dmitri Alexandrowitch, rise and follow me!"

Opening my eyes, I saw a man who repeated to me, fully awakened, the order with which he had aroused me.

"Follow you — and whither?" I faltered.

"I am not allowed to tell. But I may say that it is on behalf of the Czar!"

I shivered. On the Emperor's behalf? What could the Father of all Russians want with the poor ensign, the child of good family, but still too remote from the lowest step of the throne to have the name reach his august ear? I remembered our terrible saying, originated in the days of Ivan the Terrible: "The nearer the Czar, the nearer to death!" But halting was not to be thought of. I leapt out of bed and set to dressing myself, while I looked attentively at my summoner. Though he was muffled up in his furred pelisse, I believe I recognized a Turk, the imperial barber, and also the Czar's favourite. This scrutiny was but a glance, anyway, for there might be danger in prolonging the stare.

"I am ready," said I, buckling my sword to my side, in case I might require it.

My uneasiness increased doubly when I saw that my conductor, instead of leaving the dormitory by the regular exit, went down by a hidden stairway, curling through the lower floors. He had a dark lan-

tern, with which he illumined our devious ways. After many windings and turnings, I found we were at a spot utterly unknown to me. During all the passage we had met no one; it would seem the barracks had been vacated. If I did fancy I spied a shadow or two, they merged so speedily with the gloom that they were absorbed by the other shadows. The door which brought us to a stop was fastened, but, on my guide tapping at it in a peculiar way, it was opened, evidently by some keeper waiting at the farther side. In fact, when we passed through, I did see a man who shut the door behind us and followed.

The corridor was hewn out of clay to the width of some eight feet, the brick walls leaking with wet. About five hundred paces farther, an iron grating cut off farther advance. My pilot had the key for this, and, opening the *grille,* he let us through, but fastened it up after. We continued our way. The tradition came back to me that there was a subterranean gallery running from the Red Palace into the Paulovski Grenadiers Barracks. If this was that tunnel, we should arrive in the palace. We did reach a door, much like the first. This door was rapped upon as the other had been signalled at, and was opened in the same manner by a man on post. We ascended a stairway, and entered some rooms of a great establishment, for, though inferior in aspect, they were heated as only in a mansion. The rooms began to assume proportions worthy of a palace.

My doubts ceased thereupon, for I must be led to the Emperor, — and yet, an Emperor send for me, an ensign in the guards! But I remembered the tales of young officers, met on the street by the sovereign, called to step up behind upon his carriage, and appointed, in less than a quarter of an hour, lieutenant, captain, colonel, general! Yet it was pretty presumptuous for me to hope that I was called for such promotion!

Whatever was coming, we reached a door where a sentinel was posted. Here my leader laid his hand on my shoulder, saying:

"Bear yourself like a man! You stand before the Father!"

Whispering one word to the soldier, the latter drew aside, and he opened a door, not in any usual way, but by some secret spring.

At this sound, which was hardly a sound, a man in the room turned our way. He was a small figure, wearing a Prussian military uniform, his boots coming up thigh-high, and his coat falling to his spurs, and, though indoors, and it was midnight, wearing a gigantic three-cocked hat, all in full parade dress. I knew my Emperor. That was no puzzle, for he held a review of us grenadiers daily. I remembered now that he had let his glance rest on me the time before. He had also called my captain out of his place to question him, for they had looked toward me during the colloquy; then an officer of his suite had been given

some full and absolute order. All this heightened my disquiet.

"Sire, here is the young subaltern your Majesty wished to speak to," said the usher, bowing.

The Czar came up to me, and, on account of his small stature, stood tiptoe to look me over. Surely recognizing me as the one he wanted, he nodded approvingly, and said:

"Go!"

My conductor cringed, and went out, leaving me alone with his Majesty. I declare that I would rather have been left alone in the lion's cage with *his* tawny Majesty!

At first the Czar appeared not to pay me any heed, for he strode up and down with long steps, only stopping at the great window to inhale the fresh freezing air by a single pane arranged in a leaden frame to swing open on hinges in the double casement. After taking a long breath, he would walk to a table, where was a snuff-box, out of which he took another breath. This was his sleeping-chamber, and that window, after he was slain, never was opened again. I had time enough to "inventory" the furniture. Near a window was a chest of drawers, the worse for wear. On its top an open paper. At last the master seemed aware of my presence. He came over to me with what seemed an angry face, but the spasms were solely nervous. He stopped in front.

"Atom of dust, thou knowest that thou art but dust and that I am Everything!" ejaculated he.

I do not know where I found the power to answer, but I said:

"Thou, Father, art the Elect of the Lord and the arbiter of man's destiny!"

"Humph!", said he. He turned his back on me and walked about again, sharing his breathing between the air and the snuff, before he came upon me a second time, snapping:

"So you know that when I command, without any resistance, observations, or commentaries, I must be obeyed?"

"As one obeys the mandates of Heaven, yea, Sire!"

He stared at me so fixedly and with such a strange expression, that I could not bear the look. I blenched. He appeared satisfied with the influence he exercised over me. He attributed it to respect, but it was disgust. Going to the old bureau, he took up the paper and read it over and over, folded it, put it in a wrapper, and sealed it, not with the official imperial seal, but a private one, in a finger-ring. He returned to me.

"Bear in mind that I have chosen thee out of a thousand to execute my orders," he observed, "because I thought that they would be right well carried out by thee!"

"Before mine eyes has ever been the obedience I owe my Emperor," was my reply.

"Good, good! Remember that thou art but dust, and that I am Everything!"

"I am awaiting your Majesty's orders."

"Take this letter to the governor of the citadel, and, accompanying him wherever it pleaseth him to lead you, witness that which he shall do, and come back to me to report, 'I saw it done!'"

I took the paper, bowing.

"You understand me, you are to see and say, 'I saw!'"

"Yes, Sire!"

"Be off!"

The Emperor shut the door between us, saying:

"Dust, dust, dust!"

On the sill I stood dumfounded, but the guide was there, who said:

"Come away!"

We went away, but by a different route. It led to the outside of the structure. We were in a yard where a sledge awaited. My companion and I got in. The gates on Fontanka Bridge opened, and the sledge darted forth, drawn by three horses, at the trot. Crossing the whole square, we arrived on the river Neva's bank. The horses raced down upon the ice, and, as in a steeplechase, guided by the spires of Sts. Peter and Paul, we crossed the stream. It was a dark night, and the wind blew fearfully and ominously. I hardly could tell, save for the jar at bounding up the other shore edge, that we were over. It was the citadel

gateway. The soldier on guard was given the password, and allowed us to pass.

We entered the fort. The sledge stopped at the governor's private entrance. The password again being used, we were allowed within the governor's inner ward, as within the outer one.

The governor was abed, but he was made to rise by the mighty summons:

"By order of the Emperor!"

He arrived, concealing his agitation under a smile. Under a king like Paul, there was no more safety for jailers than captives — executioners and condemned. The warder questioned us two ocularly, and the guide responded that I was the one to do business with, by a sign. He gave me more attention thereupon, but still wavered about addressing me. To set him more at ease, but without speaking, I handed him the order from our chief. He took it to the candle-light, examined the seal, which he recognized as the private one, that to cover secret commands, and bowed to it. He made a reverential sign as if to beg heavenly interposition for himself, and opened the missive. After reading, he looked at me; reading again, he said:

"So you are to see what goes on?"

"I am to see all," was my response.

"What are you to see?"

"You know."

"But do you not?"

"No."

He fell into thought for an instant.

"Did you come by sledge?"

"Yes."

"How many does it hold?"

"It can hold three."

"Is this gentleman coming with us?" he went on, turning his head to the guide.

"No," replied the barber, as I hesitated. "I shall wait here."

"What for?"

"Till the thing is through."

"Very well. Get a sledge ready," he said to a warder, "and let four soldiers come with an axe, a sledge-hammer, and a couple of crowbars."

The jailer went out straightway. The governor turned to me and remarked:

"Come along, and you shall see."

He left the room to show me the way, and I followed, with a turnkey bringing up the rear. We proceeded thus till we came out before the prison part. The governor pointing to a door, the jailer opened it and took the lead, where in a nook he found a lantern, which he lit and gave us light. We went down ten steps, which would be the first range of dungeons, but we did not stop there; we went down ten other steps, but we did not stop there; we went down five, but we stopped here. The doors were numbered, and the governor halted before that bearing the number eleven. He ordered the attendant to open that, but

with a sign; in this ward of living death speech seemed to leave us as if we were nearly lifeless, too.

Outdoors, it was twenty degrees below freezing; in these *warmer* depths, the frost was tempered with damp, which soaked into the bones; my very marrow was frozen, and yet I had to wipe off the drip from my brow.

When the door was opened, we climbed down six steep and gluey steps, which belonged to a cell eight feet square. I heard a strange dull gurgling, and, looking, perceived a loophole a foot long by four inches wide. Through this slit the wind rushed, and made a draught to the air in the corridor through the open door. But the sound was not from the wind, but the river water slapping the fortress wall; this dungeon was below the tide level.

"Rise and clothe yourself!" said the governor.

I was curious to know to whom this order was addressed, and bade the jailer:

"Light up!"

It was not till then that I saw a thin and pallid old man, with beard and hair snow-white, raise himself. It is likely he had been thrown here in the garments he wore when arrested; but long ago they had rotted off, piece by piece, so that now the clothing was but a tattered pelisse. Through these shreds showed his shivering, bony, naked body. Peradventure, that body had been arrayed in splendid raiment; perhaps that fleshless breast had been adorned by plaques, stars, and

ribbons of noble orders; but now was but an anatomy, which had lost name, dignity, and rank, becoming plain "No. 11."

"Eleven" rose, draping himself in his clout without a murmur. His body was bowed by captivity, damp, time, the dark, and, perchance, starvation, but it had a fiery and almost threatening eye.

"That is right. Come," said the governor, going forth.

The prisoner, able to see them, gave a farewell glance at his cell, the stone bench, the earthen water-jug, the decaying straw, and sighed, — yet it was impossible that he could regret any of them! To follow the functionary he had to pass me by. I shall never forget the glance he gave me, and how much reproach lay in it.

"So young, yet already obeying the dictates of tyranny," it seemed to say.

I dropped my eyes, for this look had pierced me to the core like a dagger. I shrank back, too, that he might not touch me on the way.

He crossed the slimy threshold, over which he had entered — how long ago? I dare say he himself was ignorant. In the bottom of this abyss he must have given up the reckoning of nights and days.

As I left next to him, the jailer carefully shut the door, as if one tenant could only be removed to make room for another.

At the governor's entrance-door two sledges were

now waiting. Into the one which had brought me the governor stepped, after the prisoner had been put in; we three were seated, the governor beside him and I on the front seat. The four soldiers got into the second vehicle. I was as ignorant of whither we were going as what we should do. But the deed was no concern of mine, as I was ordered to be a witness, and to be able to say that I had seen.

We set off. From my position I had the old man's knees between my own, and felt them shaking. The governor was wrapped up in furs, and I had my winter overcoat on, but both of us felt the cold. But the old wretch was nearly nude, and yet the governor had not thought of having him covered. It struck me, for an instant, to take off my pelisse and offer it to him, but the military official divined my impulse and checked it, saying:

"It is not worth the trouble!"

Repeating our course, we crossed the Neva once more. But in the midst of the channel, our vehicle took the direction of Cronstadt. The gale blew violently out of the Baltic; hail lashed our faces; one of those terrible "snow-drivers," a local term so expressive, as local terms are, was brewing in the Gulf of Finland, where alone they exist. Although our eyes were used to the dark, we could not see ten paces ahead. When we had passed the Point, the snow-squall burst. My friend, you have no idea of what that tempest of snow, sleet, hail, and wind was on the

sea, amid low marshy land, where not a tree opposed its fury. We split a moving atmosphere, where floated thickening snowflakes and icy particles, ready to freeze solid and smother us between frigid walls.

Our neighing and balky horses refused to go on. Nothing but hard blows of the whip's butt end forced them to make a step. At any moment they might swerve and dash us against the banks. But with incredible struggles we kept the channel. I knew that, in broad day, sometimes, whole files of sledges, horses, and passengers had been engulfed on the frozen highway in one of the air-holes, and we might easily blunder into the like in the night.

And all this while my knees hugged the old man's shivering bones.

At last we stopped, at about a league from St. Petersburg. The governor got out and went to the second sledge. The four soldiers had already alighted, each holding the implement assigned to him.

"Cut a hole out in the ice," said the governor.

I could not restrain a cry of horror, for I began to understand.

"Ah, ha!" ground out the old man between his shrunk lips, with a laugh like a skeleton's. "So the Empress has remembered me? I thought I had escaped her mind!"

Of which Empress did he speak? For three had succeeded one another: Anna, Elizabeth, and Catherine. It was clear that he believed he was living

still in the reign of one of them, and that he would die unaware of the name of the ruling monarch. What was the gloom of this night to that which filled his cell?

The soldiers had set to work, chopping holes for the levers and cutting out blocks to give a clear gap. It seemed to skim over as fast as they cleaved, but suddenly they leaped back with a shout; the water gushed up, for the ice was clearly broken through.

"Step out," said the governor, returning to the captive.

It was a useless order, for the man had got out. Kneeling on the ice, he prayed. The governor whispered an order to the chief soldier, and came to me, in the sledge. The old man wrenched his knee from where the frost had congealed it, and got up, saying:

"I am ready!"

All four soldiers threw themselves upon him. I averted my sight, but I heard the splash of a body falling into the pit-hole. I could not help looking around, but the victim had disappeared. I forgot that I was not there to give orders, and yelled to the driver:

"*Pachol* — away!"

"*Stoi!* — as you are!" corrected the governor.

The sledge, already on the turn, stopped.

"All is not over," said the governor to me, in French.

"No? What more can there be for us?" I asked.

"Wait!" returned the functionary.

And we waited half an hour.

"It is frozen over, Excellency," said one of the soldiers.

"Sure?"

He kicked on the new surface, which was solid.

"Let us go," said the governor.

The horses started back at the gallop and as though the storm-fiend pursued us.

In less than ten minutes we were at the fortress, where the sledge took up my first conductor.

"To the Red Palace," he bade the driver.

It was not five minutes before the imperial bed-chamber door was opening to allow my entrance. The Emperor was standing there, dressed as I had left him. He stopped before me.

"Well?"

"I saw it," replied I.

"You did see it? You did, you did?"

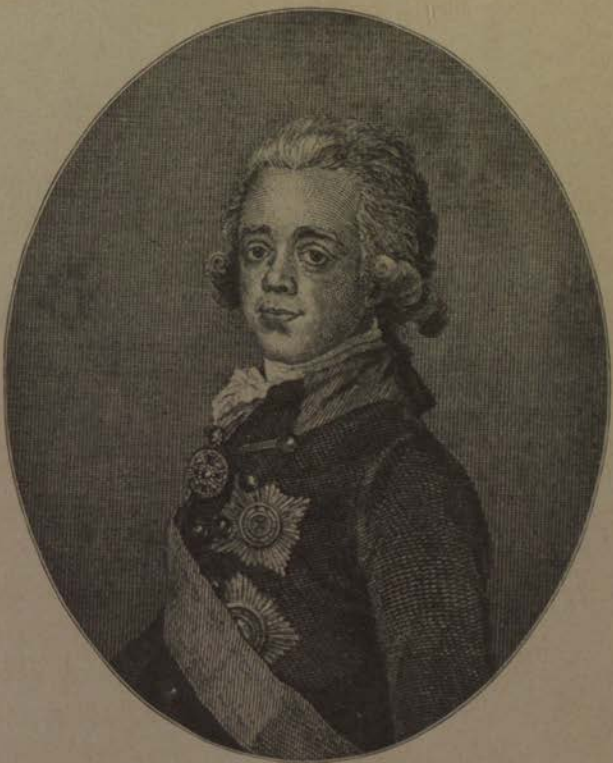
"Look at me, Sire, and you will not doubt that!" I ventured.

I was standing before a mirror, and I was not only pale, but my features were convulsed so awry that I did not know myself. The Emperor took a look at me, and without another word went to take from the bureau a paper, where the other had been.

"Between Troitza and Pereslof," said he, "I give you an estate, with five hundred serfs. Go there, this

night, and never again come to St. Petersburg! If you babble, you know how I stop mouths! Go!"

I went. I never have even visited Moscow; and this is the first time that I have related what you hear to any living soul.



CZAR PAUL I.

CHAPTER XI.

THE ROMANCE OF A CZARICIDE

(PAUL I., 1796-1801)

IN the beginning of the nineteenth century, the name of Pahlen shoots up into view and commands that attention attracted to a passing meteor.

Peter Pahlen was of good Courland nobility, as King Charles IX. of Sweden had made his forefathers barons. Pahlen, having won the favour of the Empress Catherine's last favourite, Platon Zuboff, was appointed major-general and given the custody of Riga City. The Grand Duke Paul, sometime before his ascension to the throne, passed through this ex-capital of Livonia, and was received by the civil governor with all the honours due the heir apparent. Paul was under a cloud, in a kind of exile. Little used to such treatment, he was grateful to the official for what he dared do, at risk of offending the Czarina. When he became Emperor, he sent for Pahlen, whom he made a count, decorated with the highest orders, and, with the commandership of the Body-guards, also set him as governor of St. Petersburg. For him he actually displaced his son Alex-

ander, whose affection and respect could not disarm his mistrust.

From his position, so near the ruler, Count Pahlen saw so many men rise and fall at his whim, and he had seen so many toys break to pieces when so falling, that he kept wondering how it was that he did not suffer the same fate. A recent example of the instability of human fortunes struck him.

Without any reason, his protector, Zuboff, who had preserved Paul's esteem at Catherine's death, was suddenly dismissed from his chancellery and post of palace-mayor.

That was not all. His twenty or thirty sinecures were taken from him, and a week had not passed before he was ordered to leave the country. He did retire into Germany, and, being young and handsome and covered with knightly medals, he was a brilliant beau at Vienna and Berlin. Nevertheless, he regretted St. Petersburg, where he had been a prince, — Prince of the Holy Empire, June, 1796, — and, keeping in touch with Pahlen, supplicated him to manage his reentrée into society. As the count was himself trying to stand on slippery ground, he did not know how to hold up a patron, but all at once a bright idea flew to his aid.

"There is only one way open," he wrote; "up the church aisle with a bride! Ask the hand of the daughter of the court barber, Kutaisoff. It will be given *you*. Return here to woo your *fiancée*, dally; and,

in the meantime, who knows but something will occur to detain you in town."

The advice seemed sound to Zuboff, who wrote to Count Kutaisoff for the permission to court his daughter. The latter read the letter over and over again, unable to trust his sight. The idea of Prince Platon Zuboff, favourite of Czarina Catherine, richest and handsomest of Russian gallants, wishing to be allied with his family! He ran to the palace, and, throwing himself on his knees to the Emperor, showed him the missive. The other read it and commented:

"That's the first sensible notion that mad brain ever entertained. Very well, let him come and court the lady!"

Zuboff was back in a fortnight, and, under imperial support, courted the ex-barber's daughter.

As though it had only waited for Zuboff to be in town again, a plot to upset the sovereign matured. At the outset, the conspirators had counted on a simple abdication, the substitution of one man for another, no more. The superseded one was to be hurried away into some outlandish fortress, while the heir, whose consent was not asked for, was to be set on the throne. Only a few knew that no swords were to be drawn, but, when the dagger is used, it is seldom sheathed as clean as when taken out; these knew the Czarowitch's character, and, knowing that he would not accept a regency, determined he should directly succeed.

While the head of the treasonable movement, Pahlen had scrupulously avoided giving any earnest of his complicity; according to the turn of the tide, he could assist his confederates or assist Paul. This guardedness cast a chill over the proceedings, and matters would have dragged on had Pahlen not himself spurred them on by a daring stratagem, but one which, from understanding the Czar, he knew was worthy of success. He wrote his master an unsigned letter, warning him of the danger by which the empire was menaced. Appended was a list of all the conspirators.

On looking into it, Paul's first impulse was to double the palace guards and call Pahlen in. Expecting the invitation, the count responded instantly. He found Paul in his sleeping-apartments on the first floor. It was a large, square room, with a door over against the fireplace, and two windows on the courtyard. The bed was lighted by them, and the bed hid a secret panel — a trap which, at a stamp of the foot, opened and allowed passage upon a stairway and corridor, whence the palace could be quitted.

Paul was walking up and down, marking time in his paces with terrible oaths, when the door opened to let the count present himself. The monarch wheeled around, and, fixing his eyes upon him, as he folded his arms, asked, after a pause:

"Count, do you know what is going on?"

"I only know that your gracious Majesty has sum-

moned me, and that I eagerly await his orders!" was the reply.

"But do you not know the reason of my summons?" asked the other, fretfully.

"I am respectfully waiting for your deigning to inform me."

"I call you, my lord, because a plot is woven against me."

"I know that, Sire." So the reply, as from a man who had plots served up with his breakfast daily.

"What, what, you know that?"

"I ought to, since I am one of the plotters!"

"Ah, ha! We'll soon see about that — for I have a list of the villains."

"Why, here I have the duplicate! Let us compare."

"Deuce take it — it is the double," muttered Paul, as if it were a piece of magic, in affright.

"Compare, Sire — if it is true, why, they ought to agree!"

They looked at both papers.

"So it is," continued Pahlen, coolly. "But three names are omitted."

"Which?" exclaimed Paul, wistfully.

"Sire, prudence forbade me naming them; yet, after the proof your Majesty has given of my exact details, I hope to be favoured with your entire confidence, and to my zeal entrusted the future care of your welfare."

"No dallying," said Paul, with all the savagery

of fright. "Who are the scoundrels? I wish to know them at once!"

Pahlen bowed, and intimated that respect prevented him uttering such august names.

"I understand," said the mad monarch, in a hollow voice, glancing toward the secret door for the Czarina's apartments. "You shrink from naming the Empress! You mean the Czarowitch Alexander and the Grand Duke Constantine?"

"The law does not take cognizance of those whom it cannot touch —"

"The law reaches for anybody, sir, and no crime is so great that it should not be punished. Pahlen, on the instant have both the grand dukes arrested, and pack them off to Schlusselburg to-morrow. I shall attend to the Empress myself. The other offenders come within your scope."

"Sire, give me the order in your hand, and however lofty be the head threatened, however grand the sinners — I shall obey," said Pahlen.

"My good old Pahlen!" exclaimed Paul. "You are the only true servitor I have! Watch over me, Pahlen, for I see clearly that they seek my life, and I have no other buckler than you!"

So he signed the order to arrest the two princes, and handed it to his confidant. The skilful plotter wished no more. He dressed himself in full court dress and sped to Zuboff's mansion, where he knew there was held a meeting of the plotters.

"All is discovered!" shouted he. "I hold the order to have you arrested. So not an instant must be wasted. I am governor of the capital for this night — but I may be in jail to-morrow! Let us see what you will do about it!"

Hesitation was out of the question, since to hesitate was to totter into prison or on the road to Siberia. The allies agreed to assemble at the house of Count Talitzine, colonel of the Preobrajenski Regiment; as they were not numerous, they should recruit with all the malcontents threatened with arrest. The counter-measures were in operation, as, during the day, thirty officers, belonging to the first families, had been degraded and cast into confinement, under charge of offences not deserving more than a reprimand. The count ordered a dozen sledges to wait at the gates of the prisons that held these, and, seeing that his friends stood firm, went to see the Czarowitch Alexander.

The latter had been to see his father, and had been rigid toward him as usual. Paul, in waving him farewell, had enjoined him to stay at home until further orders. So the count found him the more perplexed, as he did not know the reason for this wrath visible in the sovereign's eyes. Hardly did he perceive the visitor than he asked him if he were not bearing some order concerning him.

"Alas, sir, a dread one!" replied the double-dealer.

"I must make sure of your Highness's person and beg your sword."

"Give up my sword? Pray, why?" demanded Alexander.

"Because you are my prisoner henceforward."

"I, a prisoner? Of what crime am I accused, Pahlen?"

"'Your Imperial Highness ought to know that a man may undergo the punishment without having committed any crime, unfortunately!"

"The Emperor is doubly master of my fate," admitted the prince, "as sovereign and father. Show me the mandate, and I am ready to submit, whatever its nature."

The count showing the paper, the prince read it, after kissing the paternal signature. When he reached the part alluding to Constantine, he exclaimed: "What, my brother, too!" He had hoped the order would concern himself alone. When he came to the paragraph concerning the Czarina, he cried out: "Oh, my virtuous mother! a saint Heaven-sent among us! This is going too far, Pahlen, too far!" He dropped the decree in order to cover his moistening eyes with both hands.

Pahlen thought that the striking hour had come.

"My lord," burst forth he, falling on his knees, "hear me! Great woes must be met forehanded! A term should be set to your father's vagaries! Now he

seeks your liberty — to-morrow he may aim at your — "

"Pahlen, desist!"

"My lord knows what happened to Alexis Petrowitch?"

"Pahlen, you slander my father!"

"Not at all, my lord. For I do not accuse his nature, but his unsound reason. So many strange contradictions, inexecutable orders, and aimless punishments are only explained away by the influence of brain disease. Those beside the Emperor say as much, while those at a distance put it plainly — he is mad!"

"Merciful Heavens!"

"In short, he must be saved from himself. I am not giving this counsel, but it comes from the nobility, the Senate, and the whole realm; of all I am but the mouthpiece! The Emperor must abdicate in your favour."

"What are you saying, Pahlen?" stammered Alexander, falling back. "Am I to succeed a living sire? Tear the sceptre from his grasp and snatch the crown off his head? It is you who must be mad, count! Never, never!"

"But does not your Highness see this order? Do you believe that a prison is purely intended — a death-house? Believe me, your Highness's days are endangered."

"Save my brother — I ask nothing else," protested Alexander. "My brother and the Czarina!"

"As if I were the master," sighed Pahlen. "Is there not an order for them likewise? Arrested, and held in walls, who can tell what overeager courtiers, to serve their sovereign, will do — going beyond his intentions? Turn your gaze toward England, my prince! Much the same thing is happening there. Though the power is less extensive and the danger is less severe, the Prince of Wales is ready to take the helm, granting their King George's madness is of a mild and inoffensive type. A last word, my lord! It may happen that in saving your life, the grand duke's, and the Empress's, your father's will be saved as well."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that Paul's rule is so heavy that the peerage and Senate have determined to put an end to it by all possible means. Do you refuse an abdication? Peradventure on the morrow you will be obliged to pardon a murder!"

"Pahlen, may I not see my father?" faltered the prince.

"Impossible; the order is strict that your Highness must not be allowed to approach."

"Yet you affirm that his life is threatened?"

"Russia has no hope but in your lordship, and when one must decide between a judgment which ruins and a crime which rescues — we must choose the crime!"

He turned as to go out. Alexander detained him

with one hand, while the other drew from his bosom a crucifix by its gold chain.

"Count, swear to me on this holy emblem that my father's days run no danger, and that you for one would die to save him. Swear this, or you shall not go forth!"

"My lord, I have made bold to tell you what ought to be spoken. Consider the proposition made you. I will go and think over the vow you wish sworn."

Respectfully bowing, he went away, but posted guards at the doors. He proceeded to see the Grand Duke Constantine and the Czarina Maria, and notified them of the imperial order, but he did not disclose to them what he had said to the heir apparent.

It was nine in the evening by this; night, as it was early spring. Pahlen hastened to Talitzine's, where the conspirators, at table, hailed him with a thousand inquiries.

"I have no time to make answer," he said, "except that all goes well, and that I shall be back in half an hour with reinforcements!"

The banquet was resumed after the curt interruption, while the active instigator hastened to the citadel.

As he was the city governor, all prison doors opened to him. With a frown, and circled with jailers, those who in the dungeons saw him enter believed that they were going to be transferred to another den, or started on the way to Siberia. The harsh manner in which

he bade them get ready to go into sledges for a journey confirmed this supposition. The unfortunate captives obeyed, and found soldiers at the gates. They stepped into the sledges without resistance, the company of troopers surrounded them, and off went the train at a gallop. But, contrary to their fears, the journey ceased in ten minutes or so, for they stopped in the yard of a magnificent mansion. Bidden to get out, the captives were led within and the doors closed behind them, with the soldiers without.

Pahlen was alone with the prisoners, whom he desired to follow him.

Without any comprehension of what was intended, the party obeyed. On reaching a room adjacent to that where the conspirators were feasting, the count plucked a cloak off a long table and disclosed a bundle of sheathless swords.

"Arm yourselves," cried he.

While the stupefied officers carried out the order, and replacing at their side the blades so lately wrenched off by the hangman, began to suspect that something stranger still was impending, the plotter had the doors thrown open. The newcomers stumbled in to the table, where, in a few minutes, glass in hand, they were drinking "All hail, Alexander!" with those friends from whom only awhile since they believed they were for ever parted. Informed of what was happening, still warm with shame and rage at what had befallen them, they joyfully greeted the regicidal

proposition, and not one refused to take a hand in the awful tragedy in conception.

At eleven, the band, to the number of sixty, left the meeting and went, under cloaks, toward the St. Michael Palace. The leaders were Benningsen, Zuboff, Deprerodawitch, the colonel of the Simionovski Regiment, the Imperial Aid-de-camp Arkamakoff, Prince Tateswill, major-general of artillery, General Talitzine, the colonel of the Grenadier Guards, and many others.

They entered the palace by a garden postern; as they passed under some large trees, stripped of leaves and twisting their rugged arms, they aroused a flight of ravens. Their crossing and croaking were a bad omen, and the superstitious body wavered, until Pahlen and Zuboff rallied them to continue the march. In the palace courtyard they divided into two bands. Pahlen took one in by a private door used when he wished to confer with the Czar in secret, and Benningsen and Zuboff led the other, with Arkamakoff as guide. The latter reached the main stairs without check. Pahlen had relieved the regular sentries by officers in the league. One soldier, who had been left in the arrangement, did challenge them, but Benningsen walked up to him, and, opening his upper coat to show his breast covered with stars and plaques, said:

"Silence! Do you not see we are on special duty?"

"Pass, special patrol!" responded the soldier, nodding to imply that he understood.

In the lobby preceding the sleeping-apartments they found an officer, disguised as a private soldier.

"The Emperor?" inquired Zuboff.

"He came in about an hour ago, and, I dare say, he is abed by this," was the answer.

This was well, and "the special patrol" went on its route.

The master was, indeed, trying to get to sleep, though feeling that he was at the moment to strike at all heads by one neck, and promising himself that many a head should shortly fall!

The valet refused Arkamakoff admittance at such an unwonted hour, but he persisted that he was on active service and the Emperor expected his report. On seeing the armed men rush in, the man fled into a corner. A Polish hussar, of the life-guards, sprang to the bedroom door, and, guessing the design, ordered the invaders to stand off. Zuboff attempted to grasp him and drag him away, but the hussar fired his pistol. But instantly that single defender of the commander of fifty-three millions of men was knocked down, disarmed, and pinioned so that he could not stir.

The pistol-shot waked Paul instantly. He jumped out of bed and darted to the secret communication with the Empress's suite; but only three days before he had, in mistrust, ordered that outlet to be sealed up, and it was closed against him. He remembered

the trap in the floor, and proceeded thither. But as he was barefooted, and the spring required a heavy blow, the trap would not work. At the same time, the door fell in, smashed, and the crowned maniac had only time to throw himself behind a corner of the carved mantelpiece.

Benningsen and Zuboff dashed in, and the latter ran straight to the bed; but, seeing it was empty, gasped:

"All is lost! He has escaped!"

"Not a bit of it — here he is!" exclaimed the other.

Seeing he was discovered, the Emperor called Pahlen to his help.

"Sire!" said Benningsen, saluting Paul with his sword, "you vainly call for the count, as he is one of us. Anyway, your life runs no risk; but you are a prisoner, in the name of the Czar Alexander!"

"Who are you?" stammered the wretch, so excited that by the pale night-lamp flicker he did not recognize the intruder.

"Who are we?" replied Zuboff, presenting the act of abdication. "We are the Senate's envoys. Take this, read, and pronounce your own fate!"

Zuboff had brought the light to the fireplace corner, where he held it up, as well as the form, for it to be read. Paul did take it, and looked at it. But at about a third of the way he stopped, and, raising his head to look at the enemy, he cried:

"What have I done to you to be treated thus?"

"You have tyrannized over us four years!" was one voice in reply.

The despot went on reading. But, as he continued, the charges accumulated; the more and more outrageous expressions wounded him; ire replaced dignity. He forgot that he was weaponless and alone, surrounded by violent men with sword in hand; he crumpled up the act of abdication and threw it down under his feet, saying:

"Never! Death first!"

He made an effort to pick up his sword, which lay on an armchair near by.

At this point the second detachment arrived. It was composed mainly of young noblemen degraded or kept out of court, among the chief of whom was Prince Tateswill, who had vowed to be avenged for the insult. He had scarcely entered the room before he sprang at the monarch, struggled with him bodily, and threw him so that they knocked down the lamp and a screen together. The Czar uttered a piercing scream, for, in the fall, he had struck his head against the chimneypiece and cut his brow deeply. Trembling at the fear that the cry would be heard, Sartarinoff, Prince Vereinskoi, and Seriaitine bounded upon him. Paul rose for a space, but fell again. All this scuffle passed in the dark, amid the groans and outcries, now loud, then stifled. But at last the Czar disembarrassed himself of the hand upon his mouth.

"Gentlemen," he said, in French, "spare me — the time to pray — "

The last words were smothered, for one of the assailants had taken off his sash and wound it around the imperial body, as they dared not pass it around his neck, lest the marks should show. They wanted the death to pass as natural. The moans became a death-rattle, which soon expired. The convulsive spasms ceased, and when Benningsen brought lights they shone on the dead monarch.

While they were staring at the corpse, in the momentary lull, a noise was heard at the inner doors. The Empress was coming hither, having heard the conflict and the mingled cries. This frightened the murderers at the first, but, recognizing the woman's voice, they resumed courage. Besides, the door was sealed against her by Paul, and consequently they had time to finish their task without being disturbed.

Benningsen lifted up the Emperor's head, and, noticing no movement, carried him to the couch. Pahlen then came in, sword in hand; faithful to his dual part, he had waited till all was over to take his rank among the victors. On seeing the victim, over whose face Benningsen threw a rug, he stopped short on the sill, pale, letting his sword hang by his side.

"Cheer up, gentlemen," said Benningsen, one of the latest to join the party, but the only cool hand all the fatal night. "It is time to bear homage to the new king!"

"Ay, ay!" tumultuously called out many voices, more eager to be out of the room than they had been to enter it. "Let us hail the new Emperor! Long live Alexander!"

Meanwhile, the Empress had come around by another way; the soldiers were disputing her way, when the rebels came out of the imperial bedroom, shouting their new slogan. The Czarina recognized Benningsen at the front, and, accosting him by name, begged him to let her pass in.

"Madame, all is finished now," he said, bluntly. "Paul's days are ended, and you will only injure yours uselessly!"

The Empress fell into an easy chair. The two princesses knelt by her. They called for water lest she should swoon. A soldier offered a tumbler, but the Grand Duchess Maria would not let her drink for fear it should be poisoned. The guardsman guessed the doubt, for he tossed off half the water, and said:

"You see that? Her Majesty may take the rest without fear!"

Benningsen left the lady in this filial care, and went down-stairs to the crown prince's rooms. As they were just below, he had heard all, — exclamations, groans, shuffling of feet, the falls. The first impulse was to run for help, but Pahlen had set guards who held him captive, and he could do nothing.

Benningsen arrived with his supporters. Their cheers of "The Czar Alexander for ever!" revealed

that all was over. The manner in which he would mount the throne could be no mystery to him, and, for that matter, he addressed Pahlen, who was in the rear:

"Ah, count, what a page to commence my history!"

"Sire, what is recorded on the after pages will blot out the first."

"But do you not believe that I shall be called my father's murderer?"

"At this moment there is only one thing to think of!" suggested the arch conspirator.

"Good Heavens, would you have me think of anything but my father's death?"

"You must be recognized by the army!"

"But my mother — what has become of her?" asked the prince.

"She is in safety. But for your part, lose no time!"

The heir was so prostrated as to be incapable of a move.

"Sire, please to follow me straightway, for the least delay may bring horrible results!"

Alexander let them do with him as they willed. He was conducted to the carriage engaged to convey Paul into captivity. The door was closed on the sorrowing prince; Pahlen and Zuboff got up on the footmen's board, and, escorted by two battalions of the guards, the vehicle carrying the fate of Russia set off for the Winter Palace. Alexander's last request had been

for his mother, and Benningsen remained caring for her.

On Admiralty Square the principal palace troops were stationed.

"Hail the Emperor!" shouted Pahlen and his accomplice, pointing to Alexander to indicate that they had the sovereign.

"Long live the Czar!" shouted the soldiers, in one voice.

A rush was made for the doors, whence they extracted Alexander more dead than alive. He was borne in triumph, and acclaimed with an enthusiasm which proved that the conspirators, in committing a crime, had fulfilled a popular desire. Whatever the new king's thirst for vengeance, he had to renounce punishing the murderers.

The surgeons found that the late Emperor had died of apoplexy; the wound on the head was due to a fall after the stroke. The embalmed body lay in state for a fortnight, and Alexander had to appear by it several times, but he came away pale or weeping.

But, gradually, the conspirators were removed from the court. Some received foreign missions, some were ordered with their regiments into Siberia. None remained but Count Pahlen, still military governor of the capital. But the sight of him was remorse for the new ruler. The first occasion would be leaped at to procure his alienation.

A few days after Paul's death, a priest exhibited a sacred picture, which he asserted was brought him by an angel; on the edge was written the line: "God will punish Paul's murderers!" Informed that the people were flocking to the spot where this image was displayed, and conjecturing that the mob might act on such a hint, Pahlen asked leave to deal with the priest. It was given, and the holy man was flogged, but he cried out under the lash that he had done nothing except under the Empress's orders. As a proof, he assured Pahlen's officers that she had such another picture in her oratory. Pahlen did find the replica in that place, and had it taken forth. The Czarina justly declared this an outrage, and demanded satisfaction of her son. As the latter was hunting up a pretext for exiling the minister, he took care not to let this slip. He was ordered to retire to his estates.

"I so clearly expected this," said the count, "that my trunks are already packed!"

In an hour he sent back to the Emperor all his offices and posts, and started in the evening for Riga.

CHAPTER XII.

THE ROMANCISTS' REVOLUTION

(1825)

IN 1822 was held the Congress of Verona. It was the sovereigns' league against the people's. The Czar Alexander broke away from Napoleon I. and adhered to the other monarchs to make war against liberty. He returned home and suppressed all liberal movements, in spite of pledges to the Muscovite reforms, and forbade not only Freemasonry, but all associations for debate and agitation of improvements.

A great corporation existed in his realm at the time, publicly, occupied with general progress, education, and instruction. It became a private body forthwith, and split into two portions, which took the titles of the Northern and the Southern Society. The moderates clung to the former, and the extremists to the latter. The first chose Nikita Muravief for chief, and the other had Pestel. The Northern merely cast out the lukewarm, the other slew the backsliders.

Alexander had become detached from mundane matters, from remorse about what evil he had allowed to be done, mysticism, love of the sex, and a seeking of ease. He knew that a conspiracy of consequence

was hatching, but he paid no heed to it. He heartily knew that the regenerators were right, and, from advances he had made toward them, they had right on their side.

The catastrophe was felt to be impending. The state was in that indefinable condition when a man would have said: "I shall have to be worse to get better!"

After travelling, as much to avoid assassins as to relieve himself of ailments which hunted him like a pack of hounds, the Emperor Alexander succumbed to the fever which had been raging from Sevastopol to Taganrog, where he died.

His death had been accelerated by proof arriving that his army was honeycombed by treachery. He had time to write to this effect to the Grand Duke Constantine, Viceroy of Poland, and to the Grand Duke Nicholas, in whose favour Constantine had secretly abdicated. So it was to the true heir designated that couriers ran as the patient was menaced with death.

The tidings which produced such a terrible effect on the dying sovereign were as follows:

Through chance or suspicion, Colonel Scheikowski, commanding the Saratoff Regiment, which was relied on to seize the Czar, the Grand Duke Nicholas, and General Diebetsch, the chief of staff, was removed from his post.

This displacement threw trouble into the ardent

Southern Society. What would ensue if other regiments on which it relied, through their commanders, were likewise beheaded? It was resolved to "raise" some troops and march upon Kief, while sending assassins to murder Alexander, as he would not "die timely." There was no doubt that the sudden death of the autocrat would bring about a rupture between Nicholas and Constantine — perhaps civil war, out of which a republic would be formed.

Colonel Artamon Muravief offered to go and kill the Czar. But it was held more vital that he should stay with his Hussar Regiment and lead it. But the secret service had warned Alexander, and his letters to Nicholas and Constantine set the counter-revolution in action a little too soon.

Pestel was arrested. This struck the head off the Southern Association. Its members and those of the Northern one learnt at the same time both of Alexander's death and of his appointing Constantine his successor, though he had renounced his birthright on marrying the Princess von Lowics.

Ignorant just yet of Pestel's arrest, the bands hoped to see a conflict between the imperial brothers. Two days before the outbreak there was a large and enthusiastic meeting at Prince Trubetskoi's mansion. Prince Obolinski repeated, having clearer sight than the body:

"I know we are going to die for it; but what

glory for us and what a brilliant example to the world!"

It was given out that, in two days, Nicholas would be proclaimed to ascend the throne. It was agreed that all should then meet on the Senate Square, with all the soldiers they could bring, but to be there in person, even though they had to come alone. They flattered themselves that their demonstration would be so convincing that the new Czar would enter into terms with them. Prince Trubetskoi was to head the troops which would refuse the oath of allegiance.

The fourteenth of December arrived. Arbuzoff and other leaders found the naval forces refusing to take the oath for the envoy, Major-General Schipoff. He ordered their disobedient chiefs under arrest, whereupon, as several shots were fired in the scuffle, Nicholas Bestuchef interrupted with:

"Do you hear that, lads? Your mates are being massacred!"

He lead the battalion out of the barracks, and the officers followed without exactly participating. The revolt was quite as complete in the Moscow Regiment, where the emissaries repeated to the rank and file:

"It's a cheat to try to get you to take that oath! The Grand Duke Constantine has not given up the crown! He is a prisoner, along with the Grand Duke Michael, our honorary colonel!"

"Czar Constantine will double your pay!" added

Michael Bestuchef. "Down with all who betray the Grand Duke Constantine!"

Together with Prince Stchepine, he ordered the soldiers to load with ball cartridge. The prince commanded them to take the grenadiers' flag. He himself flew at General Freidrich and knocked him down with a sword-cut across the head; attacked General Schonshine and wounded him, and successively felled the colonel, a sub-officer, and a private grenadier. He thus cut his way to the colours, which he grasped, and, followed by the mutineering companies, hurried with his trophy to the Senate.

Prodigies of daring had been performed on their part by Yakubowitch and Kakovski. The latter had burst into the residence of the famous Miloradowitch, known as "the Russian Murat," governor of St. Petersburg, and mortally wounded him with a pistol-shot at pointblank. With another shot he slew a major.

Kukelbeker had raised his firearm against the Grand Duke Michael, but the sailors had stayed his hand.

It is easy to picture the dreadful tumult around the Senate-house. All sorts of news flocked upon the new monarch, but the clear one was of the revolt. He afforded an example of his character, not once belied during his thirty years' reign.

Instead of dallying with the rebels, as they had expected, he ordered a major-general to carry the command to the Simionovski Guards Regiment to

CZAR NICHOLAS I.

charge the mutineers and the Horse-guards to be ready to back them at a word. He went himself to the Winter Palace Barracks, occupied by the Finland Guards, and ordered them to load with ball and occupy the principal roads to the palace.

At this juncture Admiralty Place crackled with the uproar. It was the arrival of the two companies of the Moscow Regiment, led by Prince Stchepine and the brothers Bestuchef. The men shouted under the flying colours and as the drums beat:

"Down with Nicholas! Constantine for ever!"

The Winter Palace was not then guarded, but they turned aside to be backed by the Senate-house. The Foot Grenadier Guards joined them, together with some fifty men in gentlemen's attire, but armed with pistols and daggers.

This was the moment when the Emperor appeared, under an archway of the palace, and took a glance at the multitude. He was pale, as never before noticed, but quite calm. He had often been seen in his career headlong, furious, and ill-tempered, but weak — never!

In the direction of the Marble Palace was heard the gallop of horses. It was the Horse-guards conducted by Count Alexis Orloff, natural son of the fourth Orloff, Feodor Gregoriewitch.

The palace gates were opened for the newcomer, who rode through, dismounted, and ranged his men before the building. About this time the drums of

the Preobrajenski Regiment were heard. Arriving by battalions, they added to the guards around the Emperor, the Empress, and the young crown prince. The Noble Guards were forming a square behind them, with a gap at the angle to let their field-pieces be fired.

The insurgents watched all these defensive measures without other hostile demonstration than cheers for their choice and hooting against Nicholas. They were waiting for reinforcements. There had been some calling for "The Constitution!" but as the soldiers wanted to know who that was, and the only appeasing reply was that it meant Duke Constantine's wife, that war-cry was given up as not productive of enthusiasm. The Grand Duke Michael was said to be arrested, but he was running about from one military barracks to another, protesting with his presence. At the Moscow Regiment quarters he found two companies off for mischief, but he retained the rest. Count Lieven, captain of the fifth company, arrived, and ordered the gates to be shut. Placing himself before his men, he drew his sword and vowed to run it through any disobedient soldier. A young subaltern rushed up to him and clapped a pistol to his breast. The count knocked it out of his grasp with the sword-pommel, but the subaltern ran and picked it up for a fresh attack. Whereupon Lieven, folding his arms, walked up to him, defying him to murder his superior in cold blood. The regiment looked on silently and immov-

ably at this strange duel, when the lieutenant pulled the trigger — but it missed fire.

Then came a pounding on the gates.

"It's the Grand Duke Michael!" answered the arrival — the Emperor's brother.

Deep stupor succeeded the words, as the prince was said to be a prisoner. But in he rode, accompanied by a few officers.

"What means this inaction amid danger?" demanded he. "Am I among traitors or faithful soldiers?"

"Your Highness is among the faithfulest regiment of all," replied Count Lieven, "and I can prove it!" He waved his sword and cried aloud: "Long live the Czar Nicholas!"

With one voice came the soldiers' reply — a true echo. The subaltern was going to remonstrate, but his captain caught him by the arm, saying:

"Do you not see you have lost your game! Hush up, or cheer! I shall not accuse you!"

The prince entrusted Lieven with the whole regiment and resumed his course, meeting obedience if not enthusiasm.

So the news heaping upon the Emperor was good. Reinforcements arrived also from every hand; the sappers held the Hermitage Palace in line of battle, and Lieven brought the balance of the Moscow Regiment out upon the Newski Prospective. This sight aroused the revolutionists into glee, as they thought

they were friends, but, instead of joining them, they marched over to the Tribunals Building, facing the palace, which, with the heavy dragoons, artillery, and the Noble Guards, encircled the insurgents in an iron wall.

Just then arose the chanting of priests. The Metropolitan was seen, with all his clergy, marching out of Kasan Church, preceded by the holy pictures (*ikons*).

He ordered return to allegiance and duty. But as the corruption and ignorance of the clergy at the time was one of the causes of the outbreak, several of the rebel chiefs left their ranks and vociferated to the priests:

"Back! Do not meddle with worldly matters!"

Nicholas feared that there would be an attack on the religious men, and also ordered them to keep aloof. He was obeyed. The Emperor tried to make an effort to restore peace, but at the first step those about him offered to stay him. With the tone which never was withstood, he responded:

"Gentlemen, I am playing a game for my crown! I must set my life at stake! Open the gates!"

He went forward to the threshold.

He saw the Grand Duke Michael rush up at a gallop, alight, and come to his brother, to tell him in a whisper:

"A part of the Preobrajenski Regiment" — by whom the Emperor was actually surrounded — "is

unsound, and Prince Trubetskoi is at the head of the rebels!"

This cowed the Czar, who reflected briefly. But he was only the more fixed in his determination. He called for his son, who was led to him, a boy of seven. He lifted him up between his hands.

"Soldiers, if I am killed, this is your Czar! Open your ranks! I trust him to your loyalty!"

And he thrust the boy in among the grenadiers. Yet these old soldiers were the very ones who guarded the Michael Palace while their Emperor Paul was strangled within it. A heart-sprung cheer burst out, and the worst affected were the foremost to stretch out their hands to welcome the prince. He was carried into the centre under the colours. The father mounted a horse and rode forth.

At the outside the generals flung themselves before him and begged him to go no farther; it was declared that the insurgents aimed at his life, and all their guns were loaded to kill. But the Czar insisted that he relied on the Higher Power, and that he would go, though it should be alone. He rode over to the rebels, and, stopping within pistol-range, said:

"Soldiers, I am told that you seek my life! If that is true — here I am. Fire on me! and let God decide who is right!"

Some one did call out "Fire!" three times, but only at the last cry was it obeyed. Some twenty shots resounded, but they whistled around the target; not

one struck. On the other hand, behind him, a colonel and several soldiers were hit.

The Grand Duke Michael hurried out and over to the spot, the dragoons broke ranks and hastened, and the artillerists revived the fire of their linstocks.

"Halt!" the Emperor bade them.

But Count Orloff and his men had surrounded their chief, and forced him back into the palace, while Prince Michael plucked a match from the gunner's hand and set it to a piece, shouting:

"Fire! Fire on the murderers!"

Four guns, crammed with shrapnel, went off at the same time as the one he discharged.

Without its being possible to hear any counter-order from the sovereign, a second discharge followed the first. At musket-shot range, the effect was monstrous. More than sixty grenadiers, as well as Moscow men, were stretched on the ground. The rest took flight by the streets and bridges and upon the frozen river. The Noble Guardsmen set in pursuit of the fugitives.

All was finished.

A plot of five years' preparation, the romantic hope of freedom for eighty millions, — for the conspirators had embraced Poles and Russians without any distinction, — all melted away in a day! I say in a day, for it was the same day as Pestel was arrested in South Russia.

Pestel had only time to shout out to Prince Sergius Wolkonski, in German:

"Fear nothing! Save my Russian Code!" (His draft of the Laws.) "I shall make no revelations!"

The prince and Matthew Muravief were taken at the same time, but were rescued by high members in the United Slavonic Society. As soon as thus freed, Muravief attempted to accomplish a rising in the Tchernikof Regiment, and succeeded. He decided to proceed toward Kief to make a junction with others of the Slavonic Society. The chaplain said mass, and read to the military a new catechism composed for the occasion. But the soldiers did not understand a bit of it, the argument being that democratic government was pleasing to Heaven, so they had to employ, as at the capital, the name of the Grand Duke Constantine to have a rallying cry.

On the march the chief learnt that some troops on which he counted were not where he reckoned, and he was retreating, when he was set upon by General Geismar and his Hussars, who were following him. Deeming that he ought not to waver, the rebel charged at the artillery in the rear, but was fired upon. Sergius Muravief fell from a graze of a fragment of case-shot, but, though only stunned, when he awoke in ten minutes he had no men to rally — they had fled. His brother Matthew, seeing that all was lost, blew out his brains. Two others of the family were arrested.

The trials of the revolutionists in the south and at the capital were made one. The inquiry lasted over

four months. The principal charges fell upon five heads, — Paul Pestel, Conrad Ryleief, Sergius Muravief-Apostol, Michael Bestuchef, and Peter Kakovski, — all remarkable men.

Pestel was barely thirty. Though the name is German, he was Russian born. His father was, about this year, 1825, in poor circumstances. He had been a provincial governor, but, falling a victim to false accusations, was dismissed with censure. The unmerited blame was embittered in his son, educated at Dresden, who had entered into the corps of imperial pages at St. Petersburg. Becoming ensign, he won a captaincy, and figured in the campaign in France. He caned some Bavarian soldiers for maltreating French peasants at Bar-sur-Aube. Returning home as aid-de-camp to General Wittgenstein, he was promoted to be colonel of the Viatka foot regiment.

Pestel was small in stature, but supple and strong, as well as shapely; his bodily activity was proverbial. He was rated cunning, tricky, and ambitious. His intelligence was surely high. His authority was submitted to, even by those feeling no sympathy for him. One of these comrades was Ryleief, a lofty mind himself, and Alexander Bestuchef. Pestel had conceived the secret society; he had drawn up the Russian Code; in short, it was his voice was always heard when decisive projects and extreme measures were called for.

It was asserted that he was a republican in the Bonapartist style, and not the Washingtonian — but

who could tell? His death came before he could show his work. His death was terrible, and all was done to make it ignominious. Calumny might spare the dead.

Conrad Ryleief was a poet. In his poem, "Voinaromescki," dedicated to his friend Bestuchef, he predicted both their deaths, like the man who walked around Jerusalem, crying out "Woe!" for six days, and on the seventh cried "Woe to me!" and was beheaded by a stone. Listen to this prophet:

> "I know that one who seeks to be the first to strike
> His tyrants, treads upon the crumbling edge of gulfs;
> I grant that fate makes such its victim sure to fall,
> But to my mother-earth I make return of life;
> I feel that never shall mine eyes behold the flame
> Of that bright day by godly oracles foretold.
> I feel, I know, I grant! but in my placid soul,
> I vow, the blood of martyrs never flowed in vain!"

Sergius Muravief-Apostol was lieutenant-colonel of the Tchernikof foot regiment, a distinguished officer, resolute, hearty in sentiment, liberal by education.

He had belonged to the plot from the start. His double name indicates that he belonged to the Muravief family, which has given Russia remarkable sons, and to Apostol, Hetman of the Cossacks. His father had been ambassador to the Hanseatic League and to Spain, and was a Senator. He had to bewail the loss of his three sons, one dead by his own hand, one hanged, and one exiled. They had been his pride and

glory. I knew him well, when he was living in Florence, for he would not dwell in Russia where he might not weep over them. Through his tears, he told me that he had never to complain of any of them. He was a distinguished philologist, a strong Hellenist, having published translations from the classics into his own tongue. He composed a Greek ode in the memory of the Emperor Alexander, which he also set in Latin; his favourite reading was the "Prometheus" of Æschylus.

Sergius was a man of letters, if not an author. His other name was more imperative than his Russian one. It recalled the confederation of free war-chiefs, whose elective rule spread in Little Russia those ideals of independence still extant. His forefather, Daniel Apostol, elected Hetman of the Cossacks in 1727, had energetically defended his country against Peter I.'s encroachments; long captivity had repaid him for that patriotism. These memories of independence, his youthful glories, had tormented him in manhood. He and his brother Matthew had been inseparable; but death parted them, and exile parted Sergius from Matthew's tomb.

The fourth arraigned, Michael Bestuchef, — an obscure relative of the Empress Anna's famous chancellor, who came out of Courland with Biren to direct foreign affairs for Russia under the Empress Elizabeth, — was a sub-lieutenant in the Pultawa Regiment, and thus had been brought into the plot. As for

CZARINA ELIZABETH.

Kakovski, he was merely a soldier and a conspirator. He conspired, fought, and died. Ask no more!

Besides these five, the order comprised seven princes, two counts, three barons, two generals, thirteen colonels, and ten lieutenant-colonels. There were over 120 accused.

In abolishing capital punishment, Czarina Elizabeth had preserved it for high treason; or, to be more precise, had omitted to exclude that. But she had made a vow not to administer death in her time. But she allowed the knout and the rods, under which death may ensue, though not so "written in the bond." The judge knows, as well as the executioner, that no one can outlive a hundred strokes of the knout or two thousand of the ramrod. The high court condemned five of the tried ones to be quartered. These were Pestel, Ryleief, Sergius Muravief-Apostol, Michael Bestuchef, and Kakovski. One and thirty were to be beheaded; seventeen were to be sent into hard labour for life, after having to lay their heads on the headsman's block and lose their civic rights; two were given merely hard labour for life; thirty had the same penalty for a shorter period, but then to end in eternal exile. Eighteen were sent into Siberia, with military degradation and deprivation of nobility; while eight had to enter the army as privates, but not losing noble rank, and these might win their epaulets.

All but one of the 120 accused were doomed. The

examination was secret, and nothing but the result was published.

The Emperor had wished to speak with some of the culprits. He questioned Ryleief.

"Sire," said the poet, who had foretold his own death, "I was well aware that the enterprise would ruin me, but the seed we scatter will germinate, and in time bear fruit!"

The Czar then questioned Nicholas Bestuchef, saying to him:

"Sir, the steadiness of your mould pleases me; I *might* overlook this if I could be sure that I would find you a faithful servitor in the future."

"Why, Sire, that is just the matter we complain of," was the reply; "that the Czar *may* do as he pleases in matters of life and death, and has no law for the people against his pleasure. Do not change anything in the law's course as regards me, my lord! I pray this in Heaven's name! But let the fate of your subjects depend no more on your momentary whims and impressions!"

Nicholas further questioned Michael, Nicholas Bestuchef's brother.

"I do not repent of anything," said the last Bestuchef, simply. "I die satisfied and sure that I shall be avenged!"

This made the Czar thoughtful for a long time. Was his faith in his mission and in his infallibility shaken?

Do not imagine it. For when the old Senator Lapukine brought him the sentences to sign, he began with those dooming Pestel and the other leaders to be quartered, and with a firm hand wrote "*Byt po cemu!*" ("So be it done!") as he signed, under that, "Nicholas." The Senate president, who had not winced at the mad Paul's follies, turned pale at this sombre and severe justice in so young a ruler.

Nicholas was inaugurating his reign by an unexampled execution, one which had no example previous to that of the Gleboff conspiracy, wherein one of the Lapukines, ancestor of the Senator presenting these decrees, had been concerned. Nicholas noticed this twinge. When a boy, he had written in his commonplace book that Ivan the Terrible was merely a strict observer of justice. From his point of view as Imperial Majesty, he stood on his rights, and this very fate may have seemed to him light enough.

"What ails you, Lapukine?" he asked. "Is the court having sport and was not this trial made conscientiously?"

"Truly, Sire; but it may be that the court pronounced thus severely that your Majesty might derive credit for clemency!"

"I can approve a court decree, for I merely confirm in that case; but I should condemn, if I alter the doom. Tell the court that, while maintaining the death penalty, it may make any change it likes."

He tore up the paper that a new one might be pre-

sented. But he commuted the decree of decapitation against the thirty-eight of the second category to hard labour for life. He also made some alterations to soften the other penalties.

The culprits awarded quartering were allowed to be *hanged!* Clemency replaced the cruel death by a shameful one! The wretches had expected to be shot or decapitated. The gallows had been done away with in Russia, although Peter had exterminated the revolting Strelitz Guard thereby.

Nicholas signed the fresh sentences, gave the condemned twenty-four hours' grace for making peace with heaven and earth, and went off to his country-seat.

Nobody could tell the effect of the *kindness* for the condemned, as they all heard the amelioration read with impassive faces and without making any observation. All accepted religious succour.

Ryleief gave his holy attendant a gold snuff-box to pass a letter to his wife; those who know what the Russian priesthood were, at that age, will not be surprised at the high amount of the postal service.

All remained calm, Pestel more than the rest, renouncing none of his beliefs, repenting none of his deeds, and remaining to the end convinced of the wisdom and timeliness of the principles in his "Russian Rights of Man."

Since the Wolkonski execution, eighty years ago, St. Petersburg had not seen an official mutilation, or

a mortal execution. It was going to be amply recompensed.

Very early on the morning of the 25th of July, though the execution was not fixed until ten o'clock, a large gibbet was erected on the citadel rampart so that it showed five faces. It fronted on that small wooden church, the Trinity, situated on Neva bank, where Peter the Great settled first, the old ward of the capital.

At this summertide, the night begins at eleven and ends at two in the morning. In the dawn, then, when one can barely distinguish objects, drums, faintly "ruffling" in the barracks, and a few bugle-blasts were heard; for every regiment of the garrison was to send one company to be present at the ceremony. Passers-by afoot at that hour, others awakened by the preparations, gathered on the scene. As the companies arrived, they were ranked under the fortress walls. At three all the drums resounded: it was sunrise.

Only two or three hundred spectators assembled to face the troops, and, as the execution was to take place overhead on the rampart, all could see, over the helmets and musket-barrels.

A second rolling of the drums was heard. On the pure and limpid dawning light were clearly outlined the doomed spared from the capital punishment. They came forth in groups, each placed before the regiment he had belonged to, with the gallows at the back. Their sentence was read to them. They were made to

kneel, when their uniforms, decorations, and shoulder-knots were torn off from them. On their shaven heads their swords were broken in twain; they were slapped on the cheek with the epithet "*Vlob!*" ("Traitor!") Coarse overcoats were flung upon them, and they were made to file before the gallows, where all their cast-off things were flung into a huge brazier, to be burnt. Then one by one they were returned into the fort.

Not till then were the five doomed to death brought out upon the wall. On reaching the stage they were seated on stools in a line, according to the order arraigned: Pestel the first on the extreme left, next Ryleief, and so on; Kakovski was on the far right. The halters were passed around their necks, actually over the cowls, as though to prolong the act of strangulation — whether by stupidity or design. The hangman retired after this. As soon as he had gone the platform gave way like a large trap-door under the five. The sight was atrocious. The men at the ends of the file, Pestel and Kakovski, dropped and swung, slowly becoming corpses. But the three others slipped through the running nooses, and broke through the hole with their stools. Though the Russian mob is not demonstrative, several spectators did murmur and cry out with fright and horror, if not with pain. Yet even these may have been foreigners "not to the manner born."

The assistants had to go down and search for the bodies, which were in the grave too soon! The first

to be found was Muravief-Apostol. His hands being bound, he could not use them to break his fall.

"God knows," said he, on seeing daylight again, "that it is hard to die twice for dreaming of one's country's freedom!"

They made him wait on the platform.

The second was Ryleief.

"Lord! what is an enslaved people good for!" sneered he. "You do not know even how to hang a man properly!"

He was set by Muravief, while they brought up Bestuchef, who had broken his left leg in the fall.

"Was it written on high," he remarked to his fellows, "that nothing succeeds with us — not even our being hanged?"

As he could not stand, they laid him along by the rest.

Every quarter of an hour the news as to how the execution was progressing was sent off by courier to the Czar at Tzarsko-Celo. But the fact of three ropes breaking was so unimportant that it was not brought to his notice. Those who neglected that incident ought to have felt eternal regret. At that grim story, so unheard of at such an occasion, even that bronze heart might have melted and mercy been accorded.

No; the platform was raised and set again, and, between the two dead men, the three were stood up with the ropes readjusted — at least Bestuchef was

held up. The operation was renewed without any break this time, and the three culprits, whose death had made them martyrs, lost their souls to join their comrades'.

The other condemned ones went into prison or exile. They endured incredible sufferings and showed marvellous devotion. After Nicholas's long reign, release came to them by Alexander's ascension. Thirty years! It is long, very long! But God measures the reigns, and who can rate the amount of leaven for liberty which, in thirty years, ripens in the human heart and in the deep bosom of the earth during oppression?

Who knows what will yet issue out of that Siberia, bedewed with women's tears and men's brow-drops? Who dares to say that one of these days Irkutsk and Tobolsk will not be capitals of two republics?

Some day Russia will raise a monument to the martyrs of the Pestel Plot.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ROMANCE OF A POET

(PUSHKINE, 1799 - 1837)

PUSHKINE is very little known to the reading world, and that little badly, because of indirect translations; but he is nationally popular in Russia — as a Schiller in Germany, for instance. Apart from him and the fabulist Kriloff, Russia brought forth no writers up to the Emperor Alexander I.'s reign. From their works date the intellectual era.

In 1799, in the governmental district of Pskof, Pushkine was born. He was the son of a landed proprietor, grandson on the mother's side of Hannibal, a negro belonging to Czar Peter the First. This Hannibal had been captured on the Guinea coast, and, carried away by a slaver, leaped overboard fifty miles out at sea, with no hope of swimming to land; but even the hope of drowning was frustrated by a boat being lowered for him. Rescued, he was put in irons and stowed away in the hold until landed at Holland, where he was sold: it was the period of a rage among gentility for "the black boys." It was at Amsterdam that Peter saw him. His story being

told, the Russ was touched by such a spirit of freedom in a negro, and, redeeming him, took him into Russia. The intelligent African reached the grade of general and founded the Russian artillery.

Dolgoruski's "Notice on Eminent Russian Families" asserts that the Pushkines are of an ancient family of German origin, which gave several *boyards* (princes) to their adopted country in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; but we believe nothing of the sort. Perhaps these families sought to gild their refined gold with Pushkine's literary metal, but in his lifetime nobody thought of that — or them.

When assailed by Bulgarin, in his newspaper, on his lowliness of origin, he replied by verses and an epigram, which may be put in bald prose thus:

"This Bulgarin gentleman treats me as a helot, and decides that my grandsire Hannibal was bought for a glass of rum by a ship pilot on the Senegal's bank. I grant it; but he ought to add to the jest that this heaven-guided pilot, by steering the Ship of Russian State, its prow in America and its stern in Asia, joined the fiery seas with the frozen one."

Educated in the Tzarsko-Celo Imperial Lyceum, founded by Alexander in 1811, Pushkine was an execrably bad scholar. Entering the first year of its foundation, he was still a student in 1818, when he wrote an "Ode to Freedom," which he threw in the air as the Emperor came along; the latter picked it up and read it. The lines were so insulting to tyrants,

and particularly Paul I. and his "accursed breed," that the Czar's indulgence does credit to the author's genius. Still, we paraphrase it with a view of showing how far, even a hundred years ago, Russian poetry ventured to fly.

"Thou diadem'd rascal (Paul), whom I abhor in my soul with all thy breed! The sweetest of my days will have been that one whose dawn saw the ruin of ye all! As your frightened subjects saw you pass, and marked the brand upon your brow, they bade you 'Farewell!' as a universal terror, shame to mankind, and a living curse!

"When that pale torch of Night, the waning moon, dies on the gloomy stream, amid complete repose, the poet's careworn gaze dwells on one point in the dark (The Red Palace): that black pile where no fire cheers — a sinister sepulchre wrapped in a pall (the Czar Paul), sadly bathed in the fog, but more densely sunk to us in oblivion.

"But the dreamy poet is soon roused by hearing, like an ominous echo from its walls, the lugubrious trump of avenging Clio! Then rises, like the tide of midnight, the mysterious band in golden stars and brilliant ribbons over heartless breasts; their looks disquieted and their feet shuffling, like convicts', in list slippers. The faithless sentinel hushes his noisy challenge to let them steal by, over the beetling citadel's suppliant drawbridge — yielding up the master he was sworn to defend, and opening passage with his venal

hand. In the interior darkness, the crowned scoundrel runs with his soul foredoomed, yelling as he falls, and is pierced with death.

"What a lesson for you, Czars! When God commands, 'It is time!' all fade away — police and spies, your torturers, and your hangmen, whose gibbets swung the martyrs nearer unto heaven! Oh, Czars, if ye would save your fragile crowns, give up your sanguinary decrees; and place as guards upon your throne-steps, Freedom, Peace, and Justice!"

A great poet (though not from our translation) of the Byron order! But he was unfair to treat this poor ruler, maddened by solitude and maceration, as a tyrant. Under the reign of his son, whose dead body he dragged out to scourge, Pushkine was not tried or chastised: he was merely "enjoined" to leave the capital and dwell with his father in the country, where he was an official. But, shortly after, the order came for him to repair into the Caucasus. It was banishment, but not into Siberia. To some it would be a favour and not a punishment to have the opportunity to risk life with a rifle in hand in the wilderness.

The loneliness, the snowy mountain peak, the racing torrents, and the glittering sea, united to enhance Pushkine's melancholy bend, and to make him the poetical genius his land admires. In Tarak gorges and on the Caspian shores, he committed his verses to the wind; and it carried them out of Asia toward

Moscow and even into St. Petersburg. Hence his "Prisoner of the Caucasus," coeval with Byron's works, and held as equal to "The Corsair" and "The Giaour." This talent pleaded for him with the Emperor, who granted him the leave to return home to the parental roof. He was living at Pskof when the famous Pestel conspiracy broke out. He had been solicited to join it, but for once sensible, romantic though he was, the poet refused, as he saw no success for the plot. Still, he was curious to be a "looker-on at Venice" (the Venice of the North) and, early in December, he quitted where he was expected to stay, and started under a friend's passport for the capital.

He had scarcely started when a hare crossed his path. Russia is the most superstitious of all countries, and a hare is a bad token. Or it is a warning that you must not continue the errand so "crossed." As a poet, Pushkine was credulous, but he defied the presage, crying out to the postboy, who had balked and turned in the saddle to learn what to do: "On, on!"

But, a few miles farther, another hare crossed the road; and as the postilion again pulled up, the traveller was undecided for a space. Then he thoughtfully said:

"The shorter the mad-spell, the better. Let us turn back!"

To this circumstance the poet owed his liberty, if not his life, for if he had been taken at St. Peters-

burg along with the December rioters, his antecedents were so condemnatory that he would have been hanged or transported to Siberia.

He was safe at Pskof when he learnt that his companions had been executed or exiled. He was meant for action himself, so he wrote offhand:

"The reign's but begun, but it is worthy the Turk!
Five hundred in jail and five hanged — speed the work!"

The Emperor Nicholas I. could hardly be ignorant of this fresh offence to the dynasty, yet it is certain that, from this notable December, the poet's return into grace took root. The refusal to join in with the insurrectionists was found among their papers and put under the imperial eyes; not deeply perceiving the motive dictating it, and perhaps wishful to show one kindness amid much severity, he had Pushkine brought to him. The poet had imagined he was a lost man on hearing the order. Nicholas, on ascending the throne, might disapprove of Alexander's indulgence, and he might think to score off that "Ode to Freedom," though the author thought it settled. But it was more likely that the new ruler wished to meet his dues about the later couplet from that pen! Still, Pushkine could not elude such invitations, but, to his great astonishment, he received the warmest greeting at St. Petersburg, which he had called "the window looking out upon Europe," and which to him then looked out upon a promised land. In-

deed, he was appointed Russian historiographer, and given an order to write the life of Peter I.

But by a caprice peculiar to poets, Pushkine shelved that project and wrote "The Pugetchef Revolt." Even the natives do not cite this work, and the author was not happily inspired. For the imperial favour had not changed Pushkine's opinions and feelings. Far from forgetting his friends in Siberian captivity, they became the more dear to him, and he was always vociferating the swan's lament or the eagle's defiance.

The ex-pupils of Tzarsko-Celo College held their annual dinner, to reunite the ties formed in the class-room and apt to unravel in social life. Four of the brightest graduates, who had completed their courses at the same time as Pushkine, were missing: Walkorski, soldiering in the Caucasus, Naval-officer Mathuskine, voyaging around the world, Pushkine, the poet's cousin of the same name, and one Kukelbeker, the latter two buried in the Siberian mines as two of the recent conspirators.

Pushkine rose with goblet in hand, and, though Siberia yawned for him likewise, improvised this toast:

"Be Heaven your help, friends, so low,
Where every day breaks through a dense fog of woe;
Where wisdom dilutes all the bliss from above,
And gags us when we would yet sing Hope and Love!

"Be Heaven your help in this world, friends, a witch
That sours with tears e'en this wine red and rich;

Whether you are now plunged in the sea's bitter brine,
Or languish, a slave, in the deep counter-mine!"

Deadly silence followed the last words, but presently the whole table burst out into applause. Of the sixty "old boys" not one became a denunciator. This would have been fine anywhere, but it was superlative in Russia, under Nicholas.

On another day, Pushkine entered unawares the study of a friend, who was writing to one of the banished in Siberia. He took up a pen and wrote on his own behalf:

"In the stern Siberian underworld, cherish your constancy amid your sullen toil; celestial clemency never was exhausted, and the eye that sees your labours will keep record of your tears. Nothing will be lost of your spiritual longings, seed you scattered for the future harvest, for the prosperity of our infamous tyrants is preserved that doom shall appear the more bitter. Although you may doubt your friends' love when you stagger and fall in the gloom, yet, believe me, that love is striving to open to you the homeward route; there is no dungeon so tight that a star-ray will not illumine it some day! That pious love will pierce even unto your grave, and my Muse, who will make music of the clinking of your fetters, will guide it whence your bleeding brow shall wear the martyr's wreath. Its comforting voice breathes: 'Do you not know me, brothers? It is

I, who have come! Hope has illusive beams, but this is saintly Freedom — it is more than nigh! it is here!' The hour when victims are avenged is slow to come; yea, but it will ring out — perchance, to-morrow! May it find you still on the brink of your abyss, but with your irons in your hands — a weapon!"

As these were not lines for print, they circulated in handwriting, and Pushkine's popularity grew daily in the young generation, cherishing generous ideas.

At this period, he fell passionately in love with the girl whom he later wedded. In the honeymoon, he published some pieces of poetry of varied form, but in the bottom lurk the author's sadness and bitterness.

One of the most peculiar of the fancies is called

THE TWO RAVENS

Toward its mate a raven flew,
E'er croaking in its flight,
To learn "Where shall our breakfast be?
For keen's my appetite!"

The other to her bird replied:
"My dear, you need not brood!
Upon the heath a knight is laid,
Who dyes it with his blood."

"And who has wrought a deed so vile,
And why did Murder stalk?"
"None know — unless it be his dame,
His war-horse, or his hawk."

The hawk made off as fast as light,
And out of ken has soared;
And on the charger rides, as fleet,
The slayer of his lord.

And in his castle, lavishly
Preparing of the board,
The lovely widow fondly waits
The slayer of her lord.

Of the author's prose there are two volumes, one containing that story of a regicidal plot, previously brushed aside as unworthy, and collected stories known by their versions through French and German. "The Pistol-shot" and "The Captain's Daughter" have some standing.

Pushkine was thirty-eight years of age, at the zenith of his talent and popularity, when an event came to snatch him away.

Russian aristocracy was highly jealous of the author, who was founding a caste more dignified and lasting than that of his illustrious and contemporaneous lords. In war, the poet's lyre overcomes even the clash of arms; in peace, his lute pervades everything.

As they might not be able to break the passionate heart, they sought to bleed it to death. Few days passed without his receiving anonymous letters, which had the aim to inspire doubt upon his wife's fidelity. The hints converged toward a young neighbour named Dantes. The master intimated to him that his calls were unwelcome, and the visits ceased. But after

awhile, Pushkine met the intruder in his house one evening. His anger blinded him, for, without any explanation, he caught Dantes by the throat and set to strangling him. In the struggle, the captive managed to gurgle out that he was not calling on the wife, but her sister.

"If that is so, will you marry her?"

In a month Dantes became the mate of Mlle. Gantchowna, sister-in-law of the householder. This proof of innocence ought to have terminated the difference. But an inexplicable hatred had doomed the poet. The letters recommenced to rain down. They asserted that the marriage was only a screen for more wickedness. For some months the genius fought against the tide of doubt, rage, and fury boiling in him; and finally he declared that he could not bear his brother-in-law, and that the latter must quit Russia or fight a duel to the death with him. All means were exhausted to calm the poet, but he had gone mad. He threatened to insult his relative so publicly that the mortal combat would have to ensue.

Dantes begged for a fortnight, with a hope that the challenger would revoke the crazy ultimatum. Pushkine allowed the delay, but sent his second, afterward General Danzas, to the offended party. His instructions were positive, and it was agreed that they should meet with pistols.

It was the sole duelling weapon used in Russia, and by it fell Lermontoff, inheritor of this poet's gifts.

They went out into the field of honour that same day. It was in some woods a quarter-mile from the Neva, up-stream. Pushkine supervised the loading, that he might rely on the bullets not being tampered with.

They measured off thirty paces; the adversaries were allowed to fire at will, while marching upon one another: either was allowed to advance ten paces, which reduced the firing space. Dantes kept his stand, and his opponent was well on the march before he fired, which was at a little over twenty paces — yet Pushkine fell. Still he was up afoot to take aim and shoot. Dantes stood the fire, merely shielding his face with the discharged firearm. The bullet went through the forearm, and cut a button off his coat.

"A second shot!" demanded Pushkine.

But he had barely got out the word than he dropped again, his strength failing him. Dantes wished to run up to him, but hate survived the wound: the enemy waved him away. He obeyed.

The seconds examined the wound. The bullet had entered the left side, and was lost in the vitals. Pushkine was lifted into his carriage and driven home. It was six in the afternoon. His valet took him out of General Danzas's arms and carried him up to his room. He directed that he should be placed in his study, and that his wife should be kept ignorant of everything. But on learning that he had returned home, she forced her way to him. He had been undressed and put on

the sofa. He pretended that he was slightly unwell.

She saw it was more than a headache, and asked if the doctor ought not to be sent for. He agreed, adding that she should write for one, an excuse to get her out of the room for awhile. During this, he ordered the man to run for his friends and doctors.

The valet found only two at home, and hastened back with them. They had Pushkine between them while General Danzas led Madame Pushkine out. The two were grave, but they waited for Harrendt, the family physician, before pronouncing definitely. Pushkine felt that he was a dead man, for he said:

"I see I must make up my accounts!"

"Would you not like to send word to some of your relatives or friends?" asked Doctor Scholtz.

Without replying, the author turned his head toward his library, and said:

"Farewell, my good friends!" but they did not know whether he meant those in leather or in flesh.

Doctor Harrendt arrived and found the hand cold and the pulse weak and hurried. He saw there was no hope. The sufferer, from this time forward, thought no more of himself, but of his wife. She was in easily understood despair. Fortified by her innocence, she still knew that the duel had been on her account, and she could not forgive herself for being the involuntary cause of the mishap. She hovered about, but,

though he did not see her, he was conscious of her movements: he asked the doctor to keep her away.

"Poor woman! though innocent, the world will tear her reputation to shreds!" he breathed.

With the exception of two or three hours at the first, when his pangs were beyond human endurance, he was astonishingly calm. Doctor Harrendt said afterward that he had been in thirty encounters, and seen many dying men, but never had met any one with such courage. Usually, the poet was irascible and violent, but after the preliminary throes, he became another man; the storm which had tossed him all his life seemed to have died away without any aftermath. Not a word uttered revealed any impatience. In death's serenity, he seemed to soar above all hate. He had been constantly attacked by Bulgarin and Greitch in their newspaper, but, recollecting that he had been informed that Greitch had lost a son, he begged his doctor to tell the latter that he had been truly grieved by the news. His religious duties accomplished, he seemed even more placid. He attended to some business and his writings. Then, feeling a pang of weakness, he breathlessly called for his wife.

No doubt she had been waiting at the door, for she was with him in an instant. A painful scene followed, but as if he wanted a fund of energy for the last moment, he finally signalled that she was to be removed. At the same time he dismissed his children.

The outer rooms were full of mourners, and she did not want for comforters.

Prince Viazemski might be considered as representing the imperial court, and the poet said to him, in a faint but clear voice:

"Tell the Emperor that I am sorry to die, for I wished to be more to him! Tell him I wished him a long reign and happiness to his line and all Russia!"

During the night of the 29th, he said: "How I linger! My heart, that I thought had split, seems long a-breaking!"

After the doctors had given him up, he lasted; it was two in the afternoon when he woke, seemingly refreshed, and asked for some *maroska.* It is a sort of mulberry, and was brought to him as a preserve.

"Wait," said he, "let my wife give it to me."

Pushkine fondled her after taking two or three mouthfuls from her hand, and said: "You see how much better I am!" This caused her to go out, saying to the doctor: "There! Heaven is merciful! you see that he will get well!"

That was what it was done for, since the agony commenced.

He took and clasped a friend's hand, and said:

"Lift me up and let us go on high together!" Was it the beginning of delirium? Later, he was more rational, but, pointing to his bookcase, he said: "It seems to me that those shelves are the rounds of a ladder with which we scaled the heights! but my

head spins! But let us go together! Ah, no, I am to go alone!" He fell back on the pillow. "I can hardly breathe," gasped he. "I stifle!" They were his last words. He simply sighed, evenly and easily, so sweetly that all lookers-on did not see it done.

It was January 29, 1837. A death-mask was taken of the calm and grand man. More than ten thousand persons passed by the corpse to do it honour. Some had lost a kinsman, some a friend, and all a great poet. The entire court, with the foreign ambassadors, attended the funeral mass. The body was transported to his mother's burial-place, the Assumption Convent at Pskof.

The poet had two mothers; with the first, of this world, he reposes, but the other survives him, and watches proudly and jealously by his tomb — it is Posterity!

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SIBERIAN ROAD — AS TRAVELLED BY THE PEOPLE

In all countries, there is an asserted equality under the law, and after it has issued its decree of chastisement, the equality is supposed to exist more clearly than before. But aristocracy in Russia preserves some influence, even when stripped of its fine feathers; and the jailbird who has streaks of the yellow metal may hope for amelioration of his fate.

On my asking if it were possible for a stranger seeking curious sights to penetrate a criminal prison, I was answered that there were no difficulties: the authorities would be flattered by the distinction of a visit. A friend facilitated all the preliminary steps and found me a conductor.

The prison we selected was the nearest. My guide announced his business and showed his credentials. A jailer was supplied us, with the orthodox ring of keys, who walked before us up a corridor, opened the door to a winding staircase, took us down twenty steps, and opened a second door, revealing a second lobby, so reeking with damp that we might believe we were

under the ground level. Thus far advanced into the bowels of the land, the turnkey inquired if I had any preference as to my quest. My guide was the interpreter, speaking perfect French.

I made answer through him that, not knowing any of the prisoners, I would look in anywhere, provided the prisoner was doomed to go to work in the Siberian Mines.

So the man unlocked the first cell door. He carried a lantern, and my conductor and I were each provided with lighted candles. The dungeon, not being capacious, was well lighted up. On a wooden seat, large enough to be a bench by day and a bed by night, I spied a small, dried-up man, with brilliant eyes, his full beard long, and his hair shaven off behind and cut short at the temples. A chain embedded in the wall ran out to a ring welded around his ankle.

At our intrusion, he lifted his head, and asked:

"Is it coming off to-day? why, I thought it was not till to-morrow."

"It is truly for the morrow," returned my pilot; "but this gentleman is visiting the jail, and he will give you the price of a glass of brandy if you will tell him how you come to be condemned to the mines."

"There is no need to pay anything — I have told the story. I will say it over again as I did to the judges."

"Go ahead, then!"

"It is not a long story, and it runs easily. I had a wife and four children. I had just broken the last

hunk of bread for them when the *stavanoi* (steward) looked in to inform me that the Emperor, going to war on a grand scale, lacked cash, and wanted me to pay the first half-yearly tax. My rate was a ruble and seventy-five copecks." (A ruble is seventy-five cents). "I showed the collector the state we were in, the hut unfurnished, the wife and youngsters almost naked, and I begged for time.

"He said that the Czar could not wait.

"'But what am I to do?' I prayed, wringing my hands.

"'I don't know what you will do, but I know what I shall do!' replied he. 'I shall have them drop water on your shaven pate until, as it freezes, you will be inclined to pay up.'

(This torture was invented by Biren, to convert living men into ice statuary.)

"'No doubt you can kill me — but how much the gainer will you be then? You will not get the silver, and my wife and little ones will die.'

"My good woman told the youngsters to go down on their knees and pray to the good, kind steward to give us a little time so that father might find work and so earn what would pay the war poll-tax. The children knelt beside their mother."

I interrupted the prisoner to address my guide, in order to have no doubt on the speaker's truth. "I thought," I observed, "that every landholder was obliged to give each head of a family some eight

acres of tillable land and two or three of meadow for pasturage — on shares?"

"That's right for landholders, but the land-poor ones, having no land for themselves, cannot let out any; these hire out their tenants as *rabotchnicks,* or day-labourers; that is this fellow's case." He notified the prisoner to continue.

"The tax-gatherer," went on the man, "would not listen to anything, but grabbed me by the collar to hale me off to jail.

"'Stop a bit,' said I. 'I would rather sell myself to the *burlaks;* my hide will fetch five or six rubles, with which I will settle my score with you and leave a trifle for my master and family.'"

(The *burlaks* are contractors to raft wood, and do all kinds of the heaviest work.)

"'I allow you a week to pay up the contribution; but if I do not finger the Czar's pence by then, I shall clap your family in the guard-house, and not you!'

"My wood-axe was gleaming near the stove; it caught the tail of my eye — and I had terrible temptation to snatch it up and let him have one good clip! Luckily for him, he left quickly. I kissed my wife and the children good-bye, and, in going through the hamlet, I begged the neighbours to be good to them, for it was going to take me two days to get to the district government quarters and as many to get back, and in that time they might be starved to death. I let my friends know that I was reduced to sell myself

to the labour contractors, and took a long leave, as it was not likely that they would ever let me work myself free and return. Every man Jack pitied my fate, and they joined me in cursing the oppressor, but not one offered me the sum to pay the military tax for which I was selling myself. I went off, weeping bitterly, and trudged on for two or three hours till I caught up with a man of our village named Onesimus. He was driving his cart. We were not great friends, so that I was passing him without saying a word, when he hailed me.

"'Where are you going?' he asked.

"'To the district governor to sell myself to the labour contractors in order to find a sum for the Czar, which I have not got.'

"I believe he gave me a grin, but, maybe, I was mistaken.

"'Well, I'm going over to headquarters, too,' he said; 'I am going to get my barrel filled up — it holds just about two rubles' worth, less a quarter's.'

"He pointed to a keg in the cart; I sighed, for the sum was just the amount needed.

"'What are you thinking about?' he asked.

"'That, if you would do without liquor for four Sundays, and would lend me the two rubles less a quarter, I could pay my tax and my family would be saved.'

"'That's good! but where's the security that you would ever pay me back? You are poor as Job!'

"'I vow that I will drink nothing but water and eat nothing but bran bread until I shall have acquitted myself as regards you.'

"'I would rather drink my *vodka,* it is a safer investment.'

"I ought to tell you, gentleman, that, out our way, there is no charity; it is every man for himself — but that is easily explained, because we are all slaves.

"'All I can do for you,' said Onesimus, 'is give you a lift in my cart so that you will arrive without being tired, and you will fetch a higher price thereby!'

"I thanked him, but would not get in, that time. But he called me a fool and urged, so that the devil tempted me — I saw him flash by me, all fiery red! My head spun so that I had to sit down not to fall altogether.

"'You see, you cannot keep your legs,' he said; 'climb in! and when I ship the spirits, I'll give you a wet! it will put pluck in you! So in you get!'

"I did get into the cart. But when I had to rest, my hand had touched a rock, and I kept a grip of it when I was up there. It was dark as we entered a forest. I looked around upon the road, but saw nobody. I allow I was wicked, sir; but I saw myself looped in a tow-line and dragging a barge along a riverside, while my wife and little dears were crying for 'bread!' You would think he did it to exasperate me, for he set to singing, as he quizzed me: 'Take it easy, my little bride — I am going to bring you

home a pretty dress and a fine necklace from town!' I held my stone with such a grip that I believe my fingers left their prints in it. I struck the back of his head so violently that it knocked him out of the cart, and he fell between the horse's legs.

"I jumped down and dragged him into the woods. He carried a purse in which was at least twenty-five rubles. I took just what I needed, and, without looking behind me, ran all the way home. Getting there at daybreak, I roused the tax-collector and took my receipt for the payment. I could not be worried, on that account, for six months.

"When I got home, the wife and children wondered that it was I. I told them that I had met a friend who had lent me the money, and I had no need to sell myself.

"'You must not bother me, but let me work to repay my good friend.'

"I pretended to be merry, but I had death in my heart. It was not for long; instead of killing Onesimus, I had only stunned him. Coming back, he told the tale. I was put in jail, where I remained five years without any time being found to try me; then I was haled before the *sudics* (magistrates); I told them the facts. They rewarded me for pleading guilty, and instead of condemning me to ten thousand strokes of the rod, which I expected, I was merely sent to the mines. We start to-morrow, do we not, sir?" he inquired of my conductor. "Glad to hear it. I

am placed in the copper mines — it is said that nobody stands that long!"

I offered him two rubles.

"Ugh! it is too late now to give me that sum! it ought to have come to me when the steward was grinding me! before I undertook to kill Onesimus." He lay down on his bench. Placing the coin near him, we went out.

The turnkey opened another cell door; the interior was the same. But the inmate, chained in the same way to a bench, was a good-looking fellow of twenty-odd. We questioned him as we had the former, and he similarly made no objection to speaking.

"My name is Gregory," he said. "I am the son of a well-to-do farmer in Tula district. I am no idler, gambler, or drunkard. My father and mother were serfs. But as they were the best tillers on Count G——'s property, they not only had their plot of land like the others, but kept on adding to it by ten, twenty, a hundred lots. They hired labourers of a petty squire, who had no soil to cultivate, and made a pretty fortune. I fell in love with a neighbour's daughter, the prettiest girl of the parts. When I say I fell in love, that is not quite right, for I think we always had loved each other, as we grew up together. When she was nineteen and I twenty, our parents agreed that we ought to be getting married. Every year the lord is supposed to come on his estate, and we counted on getting his leave, without which the priest would not

perform the rites. But it was a steward who came down instead of him. My father and I called on him as soon as he arrived, for he had full powers from his master, and his permission would suffice. He received us nicely, and promised we should have our will. As he came to see us a week afterward, we reminded him of the promise. He merely said that he would look into the matter.

"Varvara and I did not distress ourselves much; we thought it was only a way of raising the terms for the permission, and we reckoned that, with a hundred rubles out of pocket, we should have things smooth.

"A third time we spoke to him on the subject, when he roughly replied:

"'But what about the military service?'

"'But,' I rejoined, 'I am two and twenty! Since I came of age, the *Mir* (village council) have had no idea of pricking me out. There are enough laggards and vagabonds about the place to keep the well-conducted from being selected!'

"'The *Mir* acts as it likes, when I am not here, but I am the master now, and I have the selecting of the recruits.'

"I went to seek Varvara, to share my fears with her, and found her sadder and more troubled than I. I questioned her, but could not get any satisfaction; she wept plentifully. I was in despair, for I forefelt that great misfortune was overhanging.

"Next Sunday the steward convoked a meeting of

the section. He told us that on account of the war, there must be a supplementary levy of men for the military. Instead of eight men in the thousand, the Czar required twenty-three. But the extras would be sent home the moment the war was ended. So the mayor was to draw up the list of the regular quota, and the supplementary recruits.

"I ran to Varvara, and found her still in tears.

"'Oh, I am sure that rascally steward will set you down!' she moaned.

"'What makes you believe that?' I asked.

"'Nothing — but a hare ran across my path!'

"I could learn nothing further from her. The same day the list was published: Varvara was not wrong. I was not among the recruits, but the fifth of the militia. I went home grieving. My father had already been to the steward and offered him five hundred rubles to let me off. He had rejected them. The levy was to go away in two days, early in the morning. On the eve, I strolled with my sweetheart in a little meadow where we had, as children, strayed to pick flowers. We had to cross a little bridge over a stream, narrow but deep. Varvara stopped on the planks to watch the water bubble as it rushed. She was sad. A 'hole' was said to be at that spot. I saw her tears flow one by one and drop into the gulf.

"'Varvara, there is something underhand here — you are keeping a secret! Confess it,' I continued, since she made no reply.

"'The secret is that we shall never see one another any more!'

"'Why say so? I am not a recruit, but a militiaman. Such are sent home when the war is over. Every soldier is not killed — and I am bound to return — in a year or two! Varvara, I love you and you love me — have the courage, and we shall yet be happy together!'

"'We are not to see each other any more, Gregory!' she persisted.

"'But why so awful a prediction?'

"'Loving me, you ought to know your duty.' She threw herself in my arms.

"I pressed her to my heart, wondering that she should doubt me. Shrinking toward me, she glanced into the gulf.

"'You ought to throw me down into that!' she said.

"I cried out aloud against that.

"'Yes, that you should do, that I may not be the prey of another!'

"'Another, and a prey? How, if mine, can you think of another, or another of you?' I urged her, as she was silent. 'Do you mean to drive me mad?'

"'I see, you suspect nothing? But I had better be quiet, and let come what may!'

"'You had best speak, since you began to do so.'

"She burst into sobs and appeals to Heaven.

"'Varvara,' I said, 'one thing I shall do! if you

do not speak plainly, I shall leap down there under your eyes. If I am to lose you, as well thus as otherwise!'

"'But your death will neither prevent nor revenge my dishonour!'

"By my yell of rage, she understood that I was blind no longer.

"'The steward has his eye upon me,' said she; 'that is why he wants to send you off, as I rejected him.'

"'The villain!' and I looked around me. A peasant, leaving off wood-hewing, had dropped his broadaxe, stuck in the end of a beam.

"'What do you think of doing, Gregory?'

"'By my hand, he shall die, I vow that, Varvara!'

"'Then they will execute you!'

"'What care I?' I held the axe on high; 'I shall keep my oath, and if I am executed, it will be only for me to go whither I expect to have you meet me some day.'

"I set off at a run for the village, and did not heed her calling, for I was determined. She called out a farewell and that I should have to meet *her!* At that, I stopped and hurried back, my hair bristled on end. For I spied an object streaking across the twilight: there was the splash of a body in the whirlpool — a 'tchug!' and another word like farewell, smothered. The bridge was empty. From that time forth I know not what happened — until I found myself in the

lockup. As I was smeared with blood, I believe I had brained the scoundrel. Oh, Varvara! Varvara, you will not wait long for me!"

Bursting into sobs, the young man threw himself face down on the wooden slab, uttering groans of desperation.

The jailer, opening a third door, we were in a third cell. It was occupied by a Hercules, in his fortieth year. His eyes and beard were sable; but what was seen of his hair was white, turned by a great grief. He did not wish to speak at first, saying that he was done with his judges, thank God! but on being told that I was a traveller, and a Frenchman to boot, he relented, and to my astonishment, said, in excellent French:

"That changes the face of things, sir, and, anyway, it will not take long."

"But do you mind my asking how you come to be a French scholar, and so pure a one?"

"Quite simply," was his reply; "I am the serf of a foundry owner. He sent three of us to France to study in the Arts and Crafts School, at Paris. We were ten years old. One died there, and we two returned after eight years' study. My comrade was a chemist, I, a machinist. While we were living in Paris on terms of equality with others, we forgot we were poor slaves. We were not long allowed to cherish the memory. My mate, being insulted by the master's steward, boxed his ears. He received a hundred

strokes of the rods. An hour afterward he laid his head under the steam trip-hammer, which strikes with a thousand weight at a blow: his head was pulped.

"Being of a gentler character, I got off with mere reprimands. Besides, I was fond of my mother, and endured a good deal out of love for her, and to spare her affliction, more than if I had been alone. I did not dream of marrying as long as she lived; but, five years after, I did wed a girl, with whom I had been some time acquainted. Ten months following, she made me the father of such an adorable little girl!

"My master had a mania; it was an English dog, imported, and costing him a pretty sum, it appears. She had a pair of whelps, one of each sex. They were kept to perpetuate the rare breed. But mishap befel: on his driving home, he did not see his pet dog, which ran to meet him, and a wheel passing on the creature, it was crushed outright. But, as I told you, there were the two puppies. They were but four days old, and it was a puzzle how to nourish them. My master, hearing that my wife was nursing, had the idea that our child should be sent to the *Messakina* (Public Infantile Asylum), so that she might attend to his dogs. I have heard from his English groom that in his country, peasant women are employed to bring up fox-cubs; but — well, my wife agreed to suckle the pups and her child, but he said that she would rob the curs!

"On my coming home from the foundry, as usual,

and going straight to my little one's crib, I found it empty, and asked after it. My wife told me the whole story, and pointed to the two pups, sleeping after fulness. I went out and brought my girl back from the Communal Asylum and gave it to the mother. Then I took those dogs by the scruff of the neck and dashed their brains out against the wall. Two days had not passed before I set fire to my lord's castle, but, unfortunately, the fire spread into the village and two hundred huts were burned down. I was arrested, put in jail, and sentenced to life-work in the mines, for arson. That is my story; I told you it was not a long one. Now, if you are not averse to touching a convict, let me grasp your hand. It will do me good, for I was very happy in France!"

I gave him my hand and pressed his heartily, though he was an incendiary. And I would not have given it to his master, though he were a prince.

Now that you have read how the humble win the hard-labour sentences, tell me, gentle reader, who are the true offenders — masters, lords, stewards, bailiffs, or the men they send to the mines?

CHAPTER XV.

THE SIBERIAN ROAD AS TRAVELLED BY THE NOBLES

THE convicts whose stories have been taken down from their own lips went to Siberia in the notorious "chain-gangs."

Let us see how the higher offenders fare.

The Emperor Nicholas professed a supreme respect for the law. A princess, allied with the Panines, had slain two of her serfs in a fit of rage; the State Council condemned her for murder, but, on account of her age and high connections, decided to send her into a convent for penitence. But Nicholas wrote on the margin of this subterfuge:

"Before the Law, old age and historical names cannot be pleaded; this wearer of both is still a slave to the Law. The Law orders that all murderers shall be sent to the mines. Send the Princess T—— to the mines. Be this so! NICHOLAS."

Perhaps it is as marvellous a fact as any that the order to go to Siberia is bowed to as a heavenly decree: never is known an active resistance. Even

the mailed hand drops and does not use the sword to win a temporary delay. At a parade before the crazy Emperor Paul, a regiment of horse blundered. The commander repeated the order, but, as it failed this second time, he shouted out:

"As you are — forward! at the walk, at the trot — gallop! On to Siberia!"

Knowing nothing but passive obedience, away dashed the squadrons, the colonel at the head, on the road to Siberia, where it would eventually have arrived, but for a courier overtaking it at a halt with a countermand.

Although the Russian peer was never sure that, in lying down, he would not wake in bondage, or that, stepping into his own carriage, he might not step out into a Siberian mine-shaft, stiff court etiquette clung to such changes.

When the Pestel plotters were sent into exile, in sledges carrying four, ironed two by two, the families of the Princess Trubetskoi and of Wolkonski waited at the first stage out of the capital to bid them farewell. The Czar Nicholas did not omit the attention to send for news, by an aid, of Countess Muravief and Princess Trubetskoi. The former plainly replied:

"Tell his Imperial Highness to go to the devil!"

Princess Trubetskoi was more polite in return for the odd civility, responding: "Inform his Majesty that I am in good health, and, in proof, beg him to sign my passport as soon as possible."

All the ladies had sued for the leave to accompany their husbands, and it was joy and happiness to sweeten the bitter potion. Princess Trubetskoi's mother was heard to make this sublime threat to her child:

"If you are not good, you shall not go into Siberia with us!"

Russian women are firm like this. An instance is recounted of the Princess Ivan Dolgorowski, Natalie, who went into Siberian captivity with her husband for nine years, when he was "remembered," and recalled to be quartered — the widow went to Kiel to take the black veil. But on the eve of the renunciation of things mundane, she went upon a cliff of the River Dnieper, and took off her wedding-ring, which had accompanied her in luxurious life and the penal colony, to fling it into the water before entering the cell. She survived her husband thirty years, and prayed for him throughout.

What rendered these ladies' devotion the more notable is that they were informed that from Irkutsk forward no baggage would be allowed them, and no servants attend them. The consequence was that, to harden them to the coming privations, they broke themselves from some weeks before starting to cast off silk and velvet and don coarse woollens, use their hands to domestic toil, learn cooking, and eat oatmeal and brown bread, so that their palates would be ac-

customed to popular fare as their hands to common tear and wear.

The journey on this *Via Dolorosa* begins in the straw of a sledge, with the limbs in fetters. When not in sledges, the vehicle was the *telega,* a cruel jaunting-car, of which only those who have enjoyed its travelling acquaintance can form an idea. But imagine the suffering in a stretch of thousands of miles over apologies for roads, where, in the gullies, after rain, the hubs sink under in mud!

Aristocracy by birth may have lost its hold here, but that of intellect and high fraternal ideas took its sway. Their fate was made less intolerable by the prisoners, united by the same cause, having tacit leave to nourish their hopes and dream of future liberty for the country, if not for themselves. And — may blessings fall on those who forgot their duty! — respect and consideration were shown for the revolutionists — as well in this as other cases — not known to ordinary felons. Their toil was of galley-slaves, but it was lessened; the difference was understood by the most stupid between murderers and tyrannicides. Enough leisure was permitted them at stations where they dwelt to found schools, a benefit left after them to perpetuate their memory in minds and hearts.

Then, again, for those whose wives might live with them, that halved the misery. The Czar had not imposed any burden on the women.

The story of Prime Minister Menschikoff's exile

may afford a full picture of a family's decline and revival.

We have spoken of the powerful favourite in the sketch of the Empress Catherine's ascent and reign.

Under Peter the Great, his gains had enabled him to acquire boundless real estate, not only at home, where he was peer, Senator, field-marshal, and Knight of St. Andrew, but in foreign parts. He owned so wide and broad a region throughout the empire that it was asserted that he could travel from Riga in Livonia to Darbend in Persia, and sleep at night on his own ground all the way. These vast domains were inhabited by 150,000 serf families, or over five hundred thousand souls. Add to this "live stock" more than three millions of rubles, and as much in gold and silver plate, with jewels, — presents from those needing his intercession to the master. It may have been that the latter intended to strip and banish the satrap, but his own unexpected and almost mysterious death forbade that.

Menschikoff stood, without as much power, but with all his wealth and adornments. As commander-in-chief, he had the army in the hollow of his hand. With five hundred Hectors he entered the Senate Hall, and, taking the seat his rank entitled him to, forced the succession to be given Catherine, whose master he had been, and in whose name he hoped to rule. But there was some opposition. The high chancellor and other Senators held to it that Peter II. ought to

CZAR PETER II.

follow his grandfather. Oppressed by the soldiers, they wished to appeal to the people out of the windows, but the prince said: "It is too cold to open windows!" And on the door being opened at his sign, it was seen that the lobby was crammed with soldiery. Thus the Czarina Catherine was proclaimed.

Menschikoff's guardianship weighed upon her, and he, perceiving the chafing, foresaw, too, that it were best to "foretell" her approaching decease, and he looked about for a successor. He promised the throne to the Grand Duke of Muscovy, provided the latter would marry his daughter.

Catherine fell ill and died, as we have previously related. Menschikoff became indisputable master of all things. He gave his daughter in espousal to the young Czar, and watched over the latter as if he were a captive. But Peter II. managed to escape his guards by leaping out of a window. Enemies of the upstart, for Menschikoff was but peasant-born, were waiting for the escape, and bore off the crown prince into safety, until they could call upon the Senate to rally around him.

The plotter saw that he had lost his stroke. But to risk all he went against the young monarch. But there the palace was guarded by his foes, instead of those on whom he had placed his reliance. He went back to his own palace, but soldiers arrived and arrested him. The Emperor would not see him, but

sent orders by which he had to go to his estate of Renneburg, between Kasan and Viatka.

He might have expected worse.

His fortified castle there had ample grounds, and he might live like a peer among the old nobles with whom imperial favours had amalgamated him. He had been allowed to take any number of servants and what plate and baggage he wished. What was rare in such cases of abasement, he was spoken to politely, and he might hope to come up to the surface of the court.

So he went out of his house and from the city in gilded coach and with a grand retinue, his departure resembling, not a march into exile, but an ambassador's on an important mission. In going through St. Petersburg streets he saluted the mob on all sides, like an Emperor receiving popular homage, speaking to those he knew with kindly voice and a steady demeanour. Many shunned him, without replying, as from a leper; but others, somewhat bolder, pitied him or encouraged him; he was not low enough yet to be hooted. Insult would come in good season, though.

He was two hours from St. Petersburg on the road to Siberia, when a detachment of military barred the way. The officer commanding demanded on the part of the Czar his orders of knighthood, St. Andrew, the Elephant, and the Black and the White Eagle. Menschikoff handed them over, having them in a casket for the purpose. He had sent so many princes

into exile that he knew all the arrangements to disgrace them. He was made to alight with his wife and family, and they were put in country carts, ready to transport them to Renneburg.

He obeyed, saying:

"Proceed with your duty. I am ready for all events. The more you unload me, the lighter I shall travel!"

He was put in a separate cart from the others, but was allowed to see that they came along. It was some comfort. But on reaching Renneburg, he found that the ordeal was but begun. Even at three hundred miles from Moscow, Menschikoff was still too near the sovereign. The order was for him to go to Irkutsk, in Siberia.

He looked with a smile at his dear ones, who were saddened.

"When you say," he said to the officer.

"Straightway," was the reply.

Menschikoff was allowed to bring eight servants. But the blow was severe and the shock deep. The Princess Menschikoff died on the road before reaching Kasan. The guards, who had prevented her, living, to sit by her husband, allowed the corpse to travel beside him. She dead, all the future anguish would heap up upon him.

At Tobolsk, the people, notified of his coming, were waiting for him. He had scarce landed when two noblemen, whom he had exiled in his power, rushed

up to him, each at a side, and covered him with abuse.

Shaking his head sadly, he said to one:

"Since you have no sweeter vengeance than to overload an enemy with bitter words, take such pleasure, my poor fellow! I listen to you without hatred and without resentment. I sacrificed you to my policy from your being proud and ambitious; you were a hindrance to my designs, and I broke you. You would have done the same in my place from political necessity.

"I do not even know you," he continued to the other. "I was not aware that you were exiled. As I could neither fear nor hate you, my name has been misused for some underhanded plot. This is the truth. But if reviling softens your woes, go on reviling! I have no mind or power to hush you!"

Breathless and perspiring, a third exile ran up, with flashing eyes. His mouth flowed with insults. He scooped up his two hands full of mud, and daubed the faces of young Menschikoff and his sisters.

The youth glanced at his father for leave to reply to this outrage, but the elder said to the offender:

"Your deed is stupid and shameful. Any grudge you had to vent ought to have been upon me, and not on the unhappy children. I may be guilty, but they are innocent."

He was allowed to rest a week at Tobolsk, and given five hundred rubles to lay out to his liking. He

bought cutting and digging implements, material for fishing, seed, and cured provisions for his family. What was left he gave to the poor. On the day of leaving, he was put into a cart with his three children; it was open, and drawn by horses or dogs. He had cast off his garments at Renneburg, and since then wore peasant costume. They were sheepskin caps and overcoats, upon inner clothes, and a gown for night-wear.

The journey took five months in the deep of winter, the cold at thirty or thirty-five degrees.

One day, during one of the tri-daily halts, an officer on the return from Kamtchatka walked into Menschikoff's cabin by pure chance. He had been sent out, three years previously, with messages to Captain Bering, the explorer. He had been Prince Menschikoff's aid, and knew nothing about his disgrace. The exile recognized him and called him by name. He was not recognized in his turn. The officer laughed at his appeal, and called him mad. Menschikoff took him by the hand and brought him to the window-light.

"Look and remember your former general!" said he.

"Oh, my prince, by what calamity are you brought to this deplorable strait?"

"Drop the titles of prince and highness" said the other, smiling sadly. "I am a peasant again. God raised me and cast me down. His will be done!"

Still the officer could not believe what he saw and was told. He spied a boy in the corner occupied in cobbling a pair of old shoes with awl and thongs. He went over to him, and, pointing to Menschikoff, he asked of the boy peasant in an undertone:

"Do you know who that is?"

"Alexander Menschikoff, my father!" was the answer. "It would seem that you do not want to recognize us in our downfall, but you ate our bread long enough, methinks, not to forget us," he added, bitterly.

"Silence, boy!" said the father. He turned to the officer and begged him to forgive an unhappy boy for his grief. "He is that son of mine whom you dandled on your knee when he was younger. And you see my daughters there," he went on.

The two girls, in lowly apparel, were lying on the dirt floor and dipping dry bread in a bowl of milk.

"The elder one," he concluded, sorrowfully, "had the honour to be betrothed to the *Gossudar* (Czar) Peter II."

He related all that had transpired in the capital since the officer had been absent, three years. His children had fallen asleep while he was talking.

"They are the cause of my tribulation and the source of my woes. Rich, I have become poor without regretting my lost fortune. From powerful I have become wretched, but deplore nothing — not even the loss of my liberty. Moreover, my present

misery is but expiation of past faults. But these innocent creatures, my darlings, whom I have dragged down with me, what crime have they committed? Why have they been wrapped in my disgrace? So, in the bottom of my soul, I hope that an ever just God will allow them to see their native land again! returning enlightened by experience and taught how to rest content with their state, however humble it be. Now," he continued, "we part, doubtless, never to meet anew. The Czar calls you, and you will see him again. Tell him how you found me, assure him that I do not curse his justice, however strict it is, and add that I enjoy, this day, a free will and a tranquillity of conscience never dreamt of in my prosperous time."

The officer still doubted, but the soldiers of his escort confirmed what had been told him, and he was obliged to believe.

At length Menschikoff arrived at his destination. He set to work, aided by his eight dependents, to build an *isba,* more commodious than most Russian dwellings. It consisted of God's room, that is, the place of worship or private chapel, and four more. He and his son used one, his daughters the next, and the servants were lodged next the storeroom. The daughter who was to have been the emperor's bride was housekeeper. The other, who was yet to wed a duke, did the laundry work and the mending. The youth hunted and fished.

From Tobolsk, a friend, whose name none of them

ever knew, sent them a bull, four cows, and fowls for the poultry-yard. In a garden they raised enough green meat for the family supply. Menschikoff said prayers daily to the family and household in the chapel.

Six months passed, and the party were as happy as such outcasts can expect to be.

But, without any forewarning, smallpox invaded the little circle. The elder daughter was the first attacked. The father had to be the doctor and soon the priest to the dying one. She expired in his arms, calm and resigned.

"Learn," said the bereaved parent to the others, "by this martyr's example, to die without regretting mortal things."

He dug a grave in the chapel, and carried the dead to rest there, in his arms. But the mourners had barely returned into their room than the son and other daughter were struck down in the same way. Menschikoff nursed them with as much devotedness, and was better rewarded. He drew them through the portals of death, but they were no sooner out of danger than he lay abed, never more to rise. Exhausted by pain and fatigue, and undermined with fever, he felt that his last day had come. He called the two beside his bed, and said, with the serenity never quitting him in all his distress:

"Children, I am at my last gasp, and death would have nothing but comfort for me, if I had to render

account to my Lord of only what has happened during my exile. I should leave this world and you much more tranquil if I had been able to offer the tokens of virtue in the previous life, such as I have shown here in bondage. If ever you return to court life, remember of me solely the acts and precepts you received from me under misfortune. Good-bye! Draw near for my blessing!"

He tried to extend his hands over the kneeling pair, but his voice failed him before another word could be uttered, and his head fell in death upon his shoulder.

The head of the family gone, the officer who looked after them began to show more kindness than previously. He granted them more freedom, saw that their plantation was improved, and allowed them to go to town to attend divine worship.

In one of these trips, the young Princess Menschikoff had to pass a poor native hut, beside which that her father had built was a palace. An old man's head, with bristling beard and unkempt hair, was thrust out of the plain loophole-like window. She was frightened, and went a roundabout way not to meet him. But her terror was greater when she heard him call by her name and by her title. As the call was kindly enough, she stopped and went nearer to examine the man; but, not knowing him, resumed her way. But he stopped her a second time, saying:

"Princess, why do you shun me? Ought enmity

be cherished between persons so placed and in our positions?"

"Who are you, that I should have any reason to hate you?" she inquired.

"If you do not know me, I am Prince Dolgoruki, your father's sternest foe!"

She took another step toward him in astonishment.

"True, it is you! Since when came you hither, and for what offence against God and the Czar?"

"The Czar is dead," answered the exile. "A week after being affianced to my daughter, whom you see here on that bench — much as your sister was laid out on her bench, who also was his affianced. His throne is occupied at present by a woman whom we brought out of Courland, because we thought we should live happier under her reign than her predecessor's. But we blundered. At her favourite's whim — the Duke of Biren's — we have been exiled for imaginary crimes. All the way hither we have been treated like the vilest wrong-doers, and so lacking the needs of life that we have almost perished of starvation. My wife died on the road, — my daughter is dying, — but, despite my wretchedness, I hope to live to see, in this place, this woman who delivers Russia to the rapacity of her gallants!"

The woman he inveighed against was Anna Ivanowna, daughter of the imbecile Ivan who had reigned briefly with Peter I.

On hearing and seeing what Dolgoruki's hatred was, the hearer was frightened once more and ran home. In presence of the officer, their guardian, she related what she had heard to her brother. Nothing could have been more pleasing to the latter, as he had not forgot that Peter II. had fled from Peterhof with a young Dolgoruki and by the old prince's advice. So he gave way to rage, and vowed to treat the prince as he deserved. But the officer intervened.

"You had better bear in mind the feelings your dying father's heart was filled with. Up to his last breath he did not cease to advise forgiveness of ills. On his death-bed you swore to forgive his enemies. Do not break your vow — and the more stick to it," added the officer, "from my being forced, if you persevere in your spite, to curtail your liberty."

The youth bowed to the good advice. It would seem that Heaven meant to reward him. A week subsequently a despatch from the Empress recalled to the court the survivors of the ill-fated Menschikoff family. Their first act was to repair to Yakutsk Church to give thanks to Heaven. On the way they had to pass the Dolgoruki cabin. They made as wide a détour as possible to avoid it, but the occupant was at the window. Calling them, they approached.

"Since you are allowed a liberty refused me, young people," he said, "draw near and let us mutually be of consolation, by the conformity of our distress and the account of our misfortunes."

Menschikoff hesitated to respond to his family foe, but he saw him so afflicted that he answered:

"I own that I was hateful toward you, but your misery forces me to feel nothing but pity. I forgive you as my father has done, for it may be that his sacrifice to God of evil sentiments earned us the mercy vouchsafed us by the Empress. We are recalled to the court."

"Ah, can you return?" sighed the banished nobleman.

"Yes; but for fear that you may be punished for listening to us and our parley with you called a crime, will you kindly let us leave you at once?"

"When do you go?"

"To-morrow."

"Fare ye well!" sighed the old man. "But I implore you, on going, to leave behind all the causes of enmity you had against me. Think of the unfortunate beings who are deprived of necessities, and whom, I pray, you will never see again! I say nothing in mentioning our sufferings beyond the truth; for, if you doubt my words, look upon my son, my daughter, and my daughter-in-law, so stretched out with pain on the floor that they can hardly rise. Come, come, be pitiful thus far — do not refuse them the consolation of receiving your good-bye!"

They entered the hovel and saw a heart-breaking sight. These two girls and a young man were not upstarts, like them, but coming of oldest princely fam-

ilies, allied to the ancient sovereigns — they were prone on the earth, dying, or on benches and a wisp of straw. The Menschikoffs looked at each other and smiled, for they understood.

"Hark you," said the young man. "I cannot promise you to use our influence at court, for we do not at present know on what footing we are to be presented there. But we will do what we can to soften your conditions. We have a tenable house, well provided with provisions, cattle, and poultry. Unknown friends sent us these. Well, receive them as we did — as coming from Providence! Take this, with what little we can also spare, so that my sister and I, in quitting Siberia, shall be proud to remember that we did something for those worse off than we are."

With tears in his eyes, Dolgoruki took the girl's hand and kissed it. At daybreak the Menschikoffs departed, and the Dolgorukis moved into their house. The Menschikoffs reached Tobolsk and St. Petersburg in time. The Czarina Anna Ivanowna cordially welcomed them, attached the Princess Menschikoff to her suite as lady of honour, and found her a husband in the Duke of Biren's son.

Young Menschikoff was given a fiftieth part of the paternal property, which had been confiscated to the Empress, and allowed to enjoy what money his father had banked abroad. But the Oranienbaum Palace was not restored to him. That remained Crown property,

with nothing left to tell of its passing master but a princely crown carved over the principal entrance.

The Menschikoff princess, now become Duchess of Biren, scrupulously preserved in a cedar chest the Siberian peasant's garments with which she had entered St. Petersburg; and she would go and take them out on the anniversary of her return, so that her heart might remain chastened in prosperity — fleeting at all courts, but particularly so in the Russian one.

CHAPTER XVI.

CORRUPTION IN RUSSIA

In Russia official corruption has been raised to the degree of an institution. The difficulty in reformation rests in the instantaneous impulse of all departments, if one is examined, to cry out against investigation. Abuses are the ark! woe to whomsoever assails it — the thunderbolts are launched at him! There are hundreds of persons in office who have the standing right to head their letter-paper, "By supreme order!"

Alexander I. had a privy counsellor, Speranski, whose high intelligence he fully appreciated. He commenced general reforms under his hints and on his plans. In a word, the future of Russia was going to be ameliorated by this one man's brains and by his single hand, when the Titan Abuse roared with its three hundred heads. From the climax of his master's favour, Speranski was dislodged by his foes. He was accused of counterfeiting the imperial signature in order to rob the treasury. Imagine a Czar's confidential counsellor liable to such an absurd slander! In 1812, on leaving the palace after a conference with the Emperor, he was whisked away in a carriage without

time to bid his daughter farewell. A year afterward, he had a petition smuggled to Alexander to inform him that he was starving to death. This begging letter struck the autocrat by its simplicity. How could a man perish of want who had signed for the Czar to exhaust a treasury? The inquiry showed that Speranski was much poorer than Job, as he had not even a dust heap of his own to die upon. The monarch made him a trifling pension. Strange is the justice of sovereigns! The Emperor recognized that his agent had been denounced and condemned as a forger, losing his post, his fortune, his honours, — he had been appointed a knight of the highest order, — though guiltless, and instead of restoring him to all the past, and reinstating him, he — allowed him a pension! Two years later, his innocence was manifest; he was allowed to dwell on a lot near Novgorod. Of course, he plotted, conspired, used his hidden gains to overturn something and be revenged? — not at all; he translated the "Imitation of Christ."

In 1816, a *ukase* pronounced that Speranski was clear of all charges. Prudence had dictated his *temporary* removal from office! He was appointed governor of Penza. Contentedly enough, he went into possession of his Government of Barataria. Some more land was added to the glebe, and in three years he was made governor of Siberia, to carry out a reform scheme of his invention there. Nine years passed; he came to St. Petersburg. The Emperor

received him as if there were no bad blood between them — which is a great deal in a despot. Some sovereigns easily overlook the wrongs they do. But Alexander dying, and the December conspiracy breaking out, as we detailed in the Pestel Plot, Speranski's secretary, one Batenkoff, was arrested and "pressed" to obtain evidence to incriminate his master. How can one believe that a man so unjustly used should not cherish enmity? With rancour, he might have dipped his finger in the hell-broth of conspiracy. They kept the secretary, who *could* not betray his master, twenty-three years in a submarine cell of the St. Petersburg Citadel, where he outlasted three jailers. When released, he still could not speak. His master could not cheer him, as he had died nine years before.

By the way, at the time I looked at the citadel, it was a monument to official extortion. The most remarkable feature was the scaffolding around the Petro-Paulowski spire. It had been erected about a year, and may be there now, for all I doubt. This lingering over a "job" is called in this country "the first expenses." There is no such expression in Russia as "stop the preliminary expenses." They run on. At Tzarsko-Celo is a Chinese bridge, on the sides of which are Chinese statues on pedestals. One day the Empress Catherine, going across, observed:

"Those figures want freshening up with paint — the old colours are flaking off."

A note was taken of the criticism. Next day a

painter was set to the renovation. Every year, as long as the Czarina lived, the repainting was repeated, and her decease, for, in Russia, a death does not cancel obligations, did not put a stop to the work. So much lead and oil have been coated upon the hapless mandarins that they have lost all semblance to any form — even Mongolian. To reach the wood, one would have to dig down through inches of pigment. This is merely "preliminary expense."

Catherine II. was disgusted with tallow candles, and wax ones were not common, even in palaces, in her reign. Up to her time the coarser sort was the sole illuminant in the imperial residences. She forbade that they should be used under her roof, not even in the porter's lodge. Nevertheless, on running over her household accounts, two years later, she came across the entry: "Candles, 1,500 rubles." Wishing to know who had run counter to her order, and when, she made inquiries. It was discovered that the Grand Duke Paul, coming back from hunting, had asked for a candle-end to salve a gall on the heel from his heavy boots. The candle-end had been brought him, not worth a copeck; and the copeck had grown, by Russian official compound interest, into that enormous sum. This was again but a preliminary expense.

Something akin occurred to the Czar Nicholas, who was going over the private disbursement with Prince Wolkonski, and found 4,500 rubles set down yearly for "lip salve." The amount seemed prodigious

to him. But it was explained that winter was hard upon the lips, and that the Czarina and her ladies used at least a pot per day of unguent to keep their lips fresh and free from cracking. The Emperor granted that the ladies had red lips and uncracked ones, but the outlay seemed considerable. On questioning his wife, she indignantly declared that she held cosmetics in horror. Her ladies and maids of honour, also examined, replied that, as her Majesty loathed pomades, they did not take the liberty to use them. Lastly, the Grand Duke Alexander cudgelled his brains and recalled that, once upon a time, he had chapped lips, and had ordered a pot of cold cream. A similar box being sent out for, it was priced at less than a ruble. This was not in the same proportion as the candles at a penny the end. But candle or pomade, these were but preliminary expenses.

Hence there should be no astonishment that the scaffolding on St. Peter-Paul spire should still be up. Yet there was, for more activity, a precedent which ought to have spurred the architect.

In 1830 it was noticed that one of the wings of the gilded angel, which tips the pinnacle and serves as weathercock, was so badly broken as to be liable to fall at the first storm. To repair it regularly required the erection of a very tall scaffold, and consequently a very costly one, as the spire was four hundred feet high. The estimate was about fifty thousand dollars, preliminary expenses. It was exacting to

fasten an angel's wing, calling for five tacks at ten thousand dollars a tack.

While deliberating on the problem, and leaving the wing to hang on or fly off, — some economists, arguing that, with one opinion, the figure would spin around the more freely, even though a little askew, — a peasant workman ventured to have his say. He was one Peter Telushkine, a lead-roofer by craft, but a steeple-jack by ambition. He asked leave to try to make the repairs, without any scaffold or any pay but for his work, leaving the extra remuneration to the architect, relieved of embarrassment. This proposition was so saving that it was adopted. Economy was for once having an inning!

The climbing and nailing was accomplished to the great glory of Master Telushkine, who had no help in his task but a rope; hammer and nails he carried with him for the angelic renovation of limb-setting. It was a great sight for the townsfolk and great pride for the common people, of Telushkine's persuasion, when they saw their hero at his coign of vantage, and making the sign of the cross in gratitude that the angel had not let him break his neck. The wing was secured, and in five days Telushkine came down again to the street pavement more substantial than the bronze slope where he had worked, although *terra firma* in a city built on piles is rather fluctuating. A frenzied mob and an infuriated architect awaited him. Amid the

congratulations of the populace the architect stepped forward.

"You sloven, the wing is not on straight!"

"I believe your Excellency is incorrect," faltered the climber.

"I maintain that it is put on awry! an angel's wing is not like ordinary wings. It ought to be set plumb-right!"

"Very well," said Peter, "let's go up and put it straight!" And he made the ascent the second time. But as the expense concerned the architect, Telushkine was not a penny the richer. He was forgotten for some months. But a gentleman heard of the event, and brought it under the eyes of the Czar Nicholas, who called the fellow to receive a medal and four thousand rubles. Possessor of such vast wealth, Peter became ruined. From sobriety or lack of funds, he had not been a drinking man. But from thenceforward he did not know a sober day. Unfortunately, in Russia, — and elsewhere, by the way, — drunkenness is encouraged by the government, inasmuch as the trade in liquors of thirty different sorts is farmed out to speculators, *Olkupchicks,* so that the more drinkers the more revenue. Telushkine was busy in upholding the liquor-licensing system. The result was that, during the Cholera Riots of 1831, being completely intoxicated, he threw a doctor out of a fourth-story window at the Haymarket, where the worst violence was done. Though a life-saver, the doctor was killed

outright. Pointed out as a principal rioter, and convicted of killing the doctor, Telushkine was knouted and sent to Siberia. As a good judge of such sentences says: "I believe in the Resurrection, but not in a return from Siberia." He was never more heard of. There were neither angels, nor steeples to climb, out there.

When I was at Astrakhan, Admiral Machine — it is not a comic opera name — offered to transport me to Baku, or, at least, as far as Darbend, on the steamer *Troupmann,* when it made its return trip from Maxanderan. The steamer arrived while I made an inland trip, and was about starting, but the admiral, while remembering his promise, so strongly vaunted the comforts of the land journey that I was assured that I lost nothing by relinquishing the waterway. I guessed that there was a snake in the grass. I besought the naval chief to pocket national pride and tell me frankly about the voyage on the Caspian Sea. Driven to the wooden wall, or to the edge of his conscience, the dignitary confessed that he might redeem his promise to ship us by the *Troupmann,* but while he would answer for that much, he would not for our landing.

The Caspian navy is a curious affair. It comprised four boats, but two were embedded in sand, and one was disabled, as one of her wheels was broken. The only one left was that offered us. But it had taken eighteen days to get here from Mazanderan, and as

its machinery was far from reliable, there was no telling where she would make her next landing. She proceeded mainly under sail, steamship though she was classed. That was why her arrival at Baku could not be accurately scheduled. Still we had to entrust our baggage, to lighten us, to the steamer. I treasured my travelling "plunder," but as *we* were not sure of reaching Baku, why worry about our cargo being no more sure?

Whence came this sorry state of the Russian navy of the Caspian Sea? "*Tchin.*"

"*Tchin*" is not only rank, from the Chinese sense, but the prerogatives attached to that rank.

Military engineering gives the "*tchin*" to the army to control naval construction. As there is a large margin for profit on building steam craft, the Shipbuilding Department built as many steamers as possible. As *pyroscapes* were a new invention, and nothing known about them, construction was proceeded with in order that the way to construct them should be learnt by practice! It costs the realm millions to instruct the military engineers, but what does that matter? private shipyards would build sounder vessels, and charge less, and then they would be accepted only after trial. But that would be plain sailing, and it is only long voyages that pay. But this would derange administrative machinery, and what would happen if the routine were hampered?

It is incredible to hear the Russians themselves re-

late about thefts committed in establishments, and especially in the governmental ones. All the world knows of the drains and knows the leeches, but the latter continue to bleed and the flow increases.

The only Russian who does not know what is going on and going off, is the chief of the state. He must not be told about it lest it afflict him!

Under Czar Nicholas, particularly at the Crimean War time, the robberies attained a height and romance which credit the perpetrators with prodigious wealth of invention. We allude to robberies which not only enrich but ennoble the culprit, and are styled by the polite "specs."

In military speculations, the beef contractors gain the most. Like the ancient Egyptians, they ought to raise altars to the Bull Apis!

At the time referred to, the Board of the *Volovii-rati,* Fresh Meat Bureau, would receive from the Army Supply Board five hundred head of steers and give a receipt for six hundred. Here were a hundred head — say, eight to ten thousand rubles — which the army supply chiefs gained the value of with the turn of the hand. The distribution contractors had five hundred to account for to the soldiers. We shall see what they tasted in the way of beef. The shortage of a hundred head had to be made up for by the contractors the best way they could manage. If they could not "raise" the full number by picking up stray cattle along the road, they would bribe a local mayor to certify that a

bull died in his jurisdiction; this cost a ruble. For the money in a lump sum they could make up a bundle of death-certificates at wholesale prices.

An officer narrated to me that, when the Russes retreated over the Danube into Russia, he saw the manager of the beef contractors carting a carcass, and stopping at every stage to get a proof that a bull died there, but, at the same time, selling a live one, so as to put the cash in his bag, while the soldier wanted for even a beef bone to flavour his soup. Of five hundred head served out, the men got perhaps ten.

The government received an official report that, for prevision, a station was organizing where cattle would be kept as reserves. Eighteen hundred were in store, at a hundred and fifty a head. This was expensive, but in war-times one does not pare cheese. Of course, the live stock had to be fed to keep it alive. They were kept and charged for, during five months. In war-times the provender comes high. But peace was proclaimed, and the meat was no longer wanted on the hoof. The animals were to be slaughtered and the meat cured for future use. To corn beef, salt is requisite. Salt was ordered in. With the keep and the corning, each head came to three hundred rubles. The whole ran up into over half a million rubles. It is superfluous to mention that not one of the beeves ever existed — off paper.

A Russian servant of mine, who had been a militia-

man, recounted that he had been member of a military company marching from Nijni-Novgorod to the Crimea. The captain was allowed a hundred and twenty-five rubles to buy beef for the day's supply. He did buy one cow at the Nijni market. Every time a superior officer came trotting along the line, he would say:

"Halloa! you have fresh flesh! what's that for?"

"It's a purchase made this morning, colonel (or general), and my men are going to eat it this evening!"

"Lucky dogs!" the officer would cry, smacking his lips and riding on.

The "lucky dogs" would revel that evening on boiled pease, in which was stirred a candle! The beef — ever devoured, but always alive, like the Promethean liver — arrived in the Crimea, the fattest of the troop, as it was the only one never stinted for feed. It was in such fine fettle that the captain sold it for a third more than it cost. All along the route he had charged for a cow at each stage, being paid for a hundred and fifty, or more.

As the colonels have the furnishings of the regiments, they make a good business of it. In Russia, when a colonel incurs censure, he is promoted to be a general; he has saved enough to pay for the rise. Let us see how "the Clothing Colonels" manage — easily and "without sinning," the cant expression for swindling and any theft less than highway robbery. The flour and cloth and harness wants are taken by the colo-

nel in ample quantity, but a tithe remains in his hands. In cavalry regiments, the suppression is on the forage and equipment. The largest profit is made on "the official prices," — a name for the set terms *(spravoschnya tseni)*, — laid down for supplies at halting-places and quarters in villages or towns. The colonel and the town authorities arrange the figures. The aldermen furnish the attestations, on which the officers are paid. They are enhanced so that the authorities can pocket the third and the officers the rest of the bonus.

In Russia, the principle is that an inferior in rank has no rights against his superior. Certainly, there are inspectors charged to see that the soldiers are not wronged in their food, equipment, and quarters. They are ordered to receive complaints. But all privates' complaints must be reviewed by the superior officer. The Russ "Tommy" has the right to complain — very good! but the colonel has the power to order him up to the triangle to receive five hundred stripes with the rod, and, when his back is healed, another half-hundred, and so on till he dies. The soldier winks at the despoilment rather than be flogged to death.

The War Department chief, who knows all about this, but tolerates it, receives stars and garters, while the poor musket-bearer receives the bastinado.

As before said, the Czar is kept out of the secret. Thus, the news of the Battle on the Alma was kept

from the Emperor Nicholas lest it vex him; so that, when he did learn of the disasters, he preferred to poison himself rather than sign a humiliating peace. This news arrived by a private courier, so that the War Department could not be accused of vexing his Majesty.

It may as well be said that the Emperors were not without their private savings-banks. When a banished lord was by a miracle brought back from Siberia, and by another and greater miracle allowed to go to the storehouse for the imperial confiscations, — another custom of the country, — he might see the accumulation of vanished reigns: silken ribbons, embroidered with gold and set with pearls, imperial snuff-boxes studded with diamonds, precious furniture, valuable garments, priceless furs, presents with which monarchs soothed their conscience, some prizes for rare devotedness, and — a great many — payments for dastardly deeds. This was the "captains' share" of the spoil.

Nicholas's respect for the law was great, but not above that for the "*tchin.*" Captain Violet's adventure testifies to that. As the name implies, Violet was an officer from France, in the Russian service. He was charged with an errand direct from the Czar. Like all imperial messengers, he had a Crown permit, *Padaroini,* warranting him to take horses at any post-house, and have them sent for if none were in the stable. As he was travelling day and night, he carried

firearms. Arriving at one posting-house, where the post-master, being out of horses, had to borrow of a neighbour, he took a cup of tea while waiting. A general officer came up, who called for a relay, but was told that there were no horses in.

"But they are harnessing a pair to that *kibitka* there!"

"Yes, but they are for a special courier."

"What rank?"

"Captain."

"Then unhitch those horses, and put them to my carriage. I am a general!"

The Frenchman heard all this, and came outdoors just as the innkeeper was carrying out the great man's order.

"Excuse me, Excellency," said Violet, "but I must make you observe that, though but a captain, I am the Czar's special messenger, and, as such, take the step over anybody, be it general or even a grand duke! So be good enough to give me back my team!"

"Oh, has it come to this? Suppose I do not restore the horses, eh?"

"I shall use my warrant, and by virtue of my orders take them by force."

"Ho, ho, force!"

"Yes, Excellency, if you drive me to that extremity."

"You are a saucy dog!" and he boxed the captain's ear.

The latter plucked a pistol out of his belt and fired; the general fell stark dead. Captain Violet took the horses, accomplished his errand, and then gave himself up to the authorities. They referred the case to the Czar.

"Were the pistols ready loaded? were they at hand — in his belt? He did not go indoors after them? Well, then, there was no malice aforethought, and I pardon him!"

Not only did he pardon the sinner, through "*tchin*," but, at the first occasion, appointed Violet a lieutenant-colonel.

Sometimes the "*tchin*" is purely honorary, but the enjoyers of the privilege learn how to turn the silver lining to their profit, even though they are the best and bravest of men.

The cavalry General Miloradowitch, "the Russian Murat," by reason of his brilliant dash, had reaped from his different military posts the sum of sixty thousand rubles a year, without having enough to live upon, thanks to his extravagance. After a campaign where he had exhibited prodigies of valour, the Emperor Alexander said to him:

"General, I have done for you all I could think of — nevertheless, if there is one reward omitted, name it! frankly!"

"Sire, I have always had one whim, and my cup would be full if your Majesty would grant that. I

wish to wear the simple soldiers' cross of St. George — if your Majesty allows that I deserve it!"

"Twenty times, but you have won the grand cross of the order!"

"I told your Majesty, it is a fancy!"

The St. George's cross, in Russia, is given solely to warriors for a splendid exploit — of the privates; for survivors for taking a stand of colours, or a battery, carrying a town by storm, or winning a pitched battle. The cross gives the winner double pay, but to the high grades merely the added lustre.

Miloradowitch was given his patent, and went to the Treasury, where they were going to pay him according to the tariff, five thousand rubles.

"Excuse me," said the commander, become a private for the nonce, "you mistake, my friend; I ought to get ten thousand, and not five. This is the soldiers' cross, entitling the bearer to double pay; mark that my pay, as general, when I presented this warrant, *was* fifty thousand rubles. I want five hundred thousand down!"

The demand was sufficiently grave for the question to be referred to the Czar, who thereupon understood Miloradowitch's "fancy," but he decided that it was law and payment must be made. And the Russian Murat was so paid till he was killed in the republican rising of 1825, as we have related in its place.

Such problems in financial arithmetic drive the calculator distracted in this country. The Cossack, for

instance, has to provide a horse and weapons, and, with rations, be content with thirteen rubles monthly; if his horse be killed, in war or by accident on service, he receives only twenty rubles. He must work out the sum to his profit "without sinning," which becomes his business.

The imperial *chef* has a hundred rubles a month, out of which he pays his assistants, one a hundred and fifty rubles, the other a hundred and twenty.

In the system of dishonesty may be ranked horse-stealing as an established industry. The landowner (*pomeschik*) knows who among his serfs practises this trade; but he takes good heed not to denounce him, for the whole village profits by it. The local police, the constable *(ispravnik)*, is gagged, as he receives his share. If the running off of the stock is on a large scale and leads to noise, he makes a search in the peasants' huts, where a hare could not be hidden, and where nothing is found. Why? Because the stolen objects are kept in the "Big House" stables, where nobody dare go poking and prying. The thieves do not skim the surrounding villages, which thereby become "fences," receiving-stores.

Do not run away with the impression that the craft is pursued here and there by isolated efforts; on the contrary, it is an organized occupation, systematic and permanent; youth are brought up to it, as, elsewhere, boys are taught to be jockeys. The mem-

bers of this horse-trade form a corporation known by secret signs, and mutually aid one another.

Whenever the censorship of the press is relaxed, letters exposing the abuse flock upon the editors; but none are printed. I know a journalist who has ten accusations in his pigeonholes, and is waiting to get a chance to use them. Such business is expressly prohibited by all law; but it cannot be too plainly said and too often repeated that, in Russia, the laws are in the hands of functionaries who live, not by the practice of the law, but by selling immunity from its clutches. This is clear from such a fact as that a parish constable or sheriff in a district is paid two hundred rubles a year; but he has to spend thrice as much in riding and driving alone to "cover his rounds"; add that such officials are always nominated by the landowners.

The great scourge in Russia is that a public functionary cannot be prosecuted. Granted, he can be complained of, but everybody knows from the start that the plaint will not be considered. Higher than the petty officials is the provincial governor; but he is the bosom friend of the landowners; higher than he is the Marshal of the Noble Court (the Court of Chivalry!), but he is appointed by the nobles, and he certainly is not going, for a poor clod's sake, to lose a vote at his reëlection!

The saddest thing is that wrongs go on without being stigmatized. Russia has no voice of public

opinion; that is, the punishment for those whom law does not flog.

Justice is represented blindfolded. In Russia, it implies that she must not see wrong-doing.

THE END.

Chronological Table of the Rulers of Russia

In the early centuries "Old Russia" was composed of counties, each having its own lord, the chief of which contended among themselves for the title of Grand Duke. Moscow finally gained the supremacy, gradually subduing her sister counties.

DANIEL, ——1303, was the real founder of the empire; succeeded by his son —
YURI DANILOVICH, 1303 - 26; succeeded by his brother —
IVAN I., 1328 - 40. He was called the Grand Duke of "All the Russias," and was succeeded by his sons —
SIMEON THE PROUD, 1340 - 53 and —
IVAN II., 1353 - 59.
1359 - 80, a period of civil wars.
DMITRI, 1380 - 89, son of Ivan II.; succeeded by his son —
VASILI (Basil), 1389 - 1425; succeeded by
VASILI THE BLIND, 1425 - 62.
IVAN III., 1462 - 1505, son of Vasili, took the title of Czar; killed the Czarowitch Ivan, and was succeeded by his son —
VASILI IVANOVICH, 1505 - 33; succeeded by his son —
IVAN IV., 1533 - 84 (Ivan the Terrible). Until her death, his mother, Helena Glinski, was regent. His son —
FEODOR, 1584 - 98 (an imbecile), ruled under the Godunof Regency, and ends the Rurik line.
BORIS (Godunof), 1598 - 1605, usurped the throne.
IN 1603 the claimant called the "False Demetrius" invaded Russia, but was slain. Other Pretenders arose after the death of Boris, and the realm was disturbed by factional wars until —
MICHAEL ROMANOFF, 1613 - 45, was elected Czar. He was succeeded by his son —
ALEXIS, 1645 - 76; succeeded by his son —
FEODOR, 1676 - 82, whose sister, Czarina Sophia, was regent until 1689 during the reigns of her brothers —
IVAN V., 1682 - 89, and
PETER I., 1682 - 1725 (Peter the Great), who reigned conjointly until the death of Ivan V., when Peter came into full power.

The Czarowitch Alexis died in prison, 1718, and Peter I. was succeeded by his widow —

CATHERINE I., 1725 - 27; succeeded by the son of Alexis —

PETER II., 1727 - 30, Menschikof being regent. Then came

ANNA, 1730 - 40, daughter of Ivan V. She appointed Ivan VI., son of her niece, Czarowitch, with Biren as regent, but Ivan was imprisoned and died, and the throne was seized by the daughter of Peter the Great —

ELIZABETH, 1741 - 62; succeeded by her nephew —

PETER III., 1762 - 68. Murdered by order of his wife Catherine, who usurped the throne.

CATHERINE II., 1768 - 96 (Catherine the Great); succeeded by her son —

PAUL I., 1796 - 1801. Assassinated; and succeeded by his son —

ALEXANDER I., 1801 - 25. His natural successor, Constantine, son of Paul, abdicated of his own free will, and the next Czar was Constantine's brother —

NICHOLAS I., 1825 - 55; succeeded by his son —

ALEXANDER II., 1855 - 81. Assassinated; succeeded by his son —

ALEXANDER III., 1881 - 94; succeeded by

NICHOLAS II., 1894 —

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